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LINDER, ROBERTA PENN. Production Thesis: The Ghost Sonata. (1972)
Directed by: Dr. Herman Middleton. Pp.

The purpose of this thesis was to research, direct, and evaluate a production of The Ghost Sonata by August Strindberg. This thesis is a compilation of the director's research, analysis, and experience with the production.

Part One includes the following: (1) historical considerations, (2) stylistic considerations, (3) detailed character descriptions and analyses, (4) an analysis of the setting and mood of the play, and (5) justification for the director's choice of script.

Part Two is the director's prompt book for the production of The Ghost Sonata. The prompt book includes notation on (1) blocking, (2) composition, (3) details of characterizations, (4) stage business, and (5) timing. In addition, there are photographs of the production and plates depicting the blocking of the play.

Part Three of this thesis is the director's personal evaluation of the total production. This evaluation consists of: (1) the initial interpretation of the script, The Ghost Sonata, as compared with the final product, (2) the actor-director relationship during the total experience of the production, (3) the audience's reaction to the production, and (4) the director's personal observations.

PRODUCTION THESIS: THE GHOST SONATA

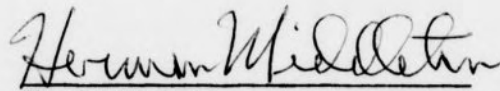
by

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Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL SHEET

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PART I

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND ANALYSES

PART I

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND ANALYSES

Introduction

The ensuing paper results from the director's study of August Strindberg. The culmination of the experience will come with the production of The Ghost Sonata. It will be a culmination of the study of August Strindberg, the study of The Ghost Sonata, and the experience of the rehearsal period. These three elements are inseparable because of the nature of the production. The Ghost Sonata is an expression of Strindberg's concern for the human condition. The director's production of The Ghost Sonata will be an expression of her concern for the human condition. The director hopes that Strindberg's ideas have become so vital to her that The Ghost Sonata will come alive and have meaning for the audience of 1972, just as it will for the director and the cast.

Historical Considerations

The most important historical considerations for this production of The Ghost Sonata arise from a general combination of historical, social, philosophical and cultural aspects of the time. Victorian ideas were in practice, but modern ideas were creeping up in the universities and lower classes. Art was revolting against the Victorian naturalism in the form of art nouveau. Europe was being influenced by its re-discovery of Eastern art and philosophy. There were great discrepancies

between the ideals of life and life itself. August Strindberg was an extreme example of the confusion of the times.

August Strindberg was a mirror of his own time. His writings express the dissatisfaction and disillusionment of his era. The Ghost Sonata is a pain-filled but honest and human reflection which we can still perceive in a mirror of today's life, because it is a timeless mirror with its image just as relevant in 1972 as it was sixty-five years ago in 1907. Strindberg's own life exemplifies the problem set forth in The Ghost Sonata.

His whole life was a passionate defiant assertion of the individual will; and yet he eternally bore the burden of the disillusioned idealist, sardonically delineating the dreadful, inescapable obligations of contemporary civilization.¹

Strindberg's duality was a product of his times. He was concerned with man as an individual and as a component in society. He was much like the student in The Ghost Sonata. He wanted all the truth and beauty of life, but he was constantly realizing that the social structure did not always function truthfully and that truth is often relative.²

Much of Strindberg's concern with man in many capacities arose from his own life and from the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche proclaimed that God is dead and that man's only salvation is man himself. From this basic premise, many European intellectuals surmised that if man is to save man, he must start by looking into himself and his environment. When they looked, they saw the horror of man's injustices to other men. They began to feel that man must reconsider

¹Archibald Henderson, European Dramatists (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Co., 1916), p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 71.

his state and improve it. They criticized the social mores, the class structure, the governments of their nations. And in the search for a better way, fear and doubt and guilt erupted. On one side there was the open intellectual search for truth and the best way and on the other side, the emotional fear that the new truth would destroy the existing structure. Students were revolting against class structure while the very few but powerful rich were trying to maintain their power at all costs.

Strindberg felt this conflict in himself and his country. His writings were scathing comments on marriage, social amenities, and religion. Because of negative reactions to his social comments, he exiled himself from his own country, Sweden. But Strindberg returned, his thoughts turned inward in an attempt to resolve man's conflicts on the most basic personal level. The social statements were still there in his characters, but he was searching for more universal answers. He was dealing with man in his human essence rather than just a temporal character from everyday life.

The analogy of Strindberg's 1907 to our 1972 is almost uncanny. We too are searching for a better way for man to exist with himself and his fellow man. Our own country, the United States, is divided between the search for better ways and the fear that the old ways are the best and should not be changed. Often the student in today's world can see what other people cannot see, but he doesn't have the practical experience or the understanding to articulate a new and better system. He finds disillusionment beginning in himself because he can see the problem but not the answer, or the answer that he has is not always applicable. And

then, like a pebble thrown into a still pool, the circle of disillusionment extends out into his daily life, his community, his nation, and his world. The ripples reach the edge of the pool, the extent of human understanding, and he starts over again, looking at the pebble, wondering if he can find the answer to his own existence. This student of today is like the student in The Ghost Sonata who enters his dream with a very romantic idealized view of the world around him. As he becomes a part of the dream, he sees the contradictions in society and himself and reaches the rim of human understanding, the death of a loved one.

In The Theatre of Revolt, Robert Brustein states that in The Ghost Sonata, Strindberg's "revolt is existential, directed against the meaninglessness and contradictions of human existence."³ Certainly today we are confronted with the same questions, still unanswered.

Behind the meaningless contradictions of life, we have the problem of basic communication. In The Ghost Sonata, people change without apparent reason and what they are and what they say is in opposition to what they were. And the credibility gap widens so that communication is worthless. The ghost supper in scene ii is "as much an avant-garde comment on non-communication as is Ionesco's meaningless, mundane chatter in The Bald Soprano."⁴ The student is also frustrated in his attempts to express himself.

How can people communicate if words are, on the one hand, too ineffectual for the job (as with the student and the young girl),

³Robert Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), p. 93.

⁴August Strindberg, A Dream Play and The Ghost Sonata, trans. by Carl Richard Mueller and intro. by Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1966), p. xxxi.

or, on the other hand (the student's painful experience of his father being committed to a mad house), too upsetting to the sleepwalkers who prefer their illusions to the truth?⁵

Today we often find it too painful and frustrating to even bother to express what we really feel or think. And we find that we change so often that it is embarrassing to express anything at all.

In bringing the ideas of Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata to the stage, this director feels there is another prominent factor--hope through understanding. After the young girl dies, the student repeats the poem:

I saw the sun
And from its blaze
There burst on me
The deepest truth:

Man reaps as he sows:
Blessed is he
Who sows the good.

For deeds done in anger
Kindness alone
Can make amends.

Bring cheer to those
Whom you have hurt,
And kindness reaps
Its own rewards.

The pure in heart
Have none to fear
The harmless are happy,⁶
The guileless are good.

It's a simple poem with a very basic idea that goodness and kindness can bring happiness. For the student to utter these words meaningfully, he has undergone much disillusionment and suffering. He has come to

⁵Ibid.

⁶August Strindberg, The Chamber Plays, trans. and intro. by Evert Sprinchorn, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1962), pp. 151-152.

face certain aspects of himself and his environment. His hope, like ours, lies in understanding himself and trying to unselfishly comprehend the world around him. And perhaps the only release is in turning to something that is beyond man--religion. Perhaps this thought is trite and obvious, but then it may just be another one of the great contradictions of human existence; what is obvious is most often overlooked.

Stylistic Considerations

To pin Strindberg down to any one style would be to disavow his own beliefs. He wrote The Ghost Sonata as a chamber play to be performed in his Intimate Theatre in Stockholm. In Open Letters to the Intimate Theatre, Strindberg says,

If anyone asks what it is an intimate theatre wants to achieve and what is meant by chamber plays, I can answer like this: in drama we seek the strong, highly significant motif, but with limitations. We try to avoid in the treatment all frivolity, all calculated effects, places for applause, star roles, solo numbers, no predetermined form is to limit the author because the motif determines the form. Consequently, . . . /there is/ freedom in treatment, which is limited only by the unity of the concept and the feeling for style.⁷

The Ghost Sonata cannot be strictly placed in a category. It must be considered as a piece of art with its own style arising out of the particular production.

Of course, there are inherent stylistic qualities in The Ghost Sonata, the most obvious one being the dream quality of the play. The

⁷August Strindberg, Open Letters to the Intimate Theatre, trans. and intro. by Walter Johnson (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), p. 19.

one element of the play that holds it together as a unit rather than three separate scenes is the mind of the dreamer.

The psychical dream rises out of the unconscious mind of the dreamer, and represents to him in a series of symbolic images the problems and wishes most central to him. As such, the dream is the essence of subjective concern.⁸

Dealing with the subjective conscious of the dreamer is most definitely an element of the expressionistic style because in expressionism, the understanding of one's self comes through the experiences of one's own ego.⁹ But one can also say that this play is surrealist because thoughts assume life-like qualities.¹⁰ The Ghost Sonata has realistic, expressionistic, and surrealist elements which can add up to total confusion of style. The director feels that the reality of the play comes from the student. It is his dream and dreams are real to the dreamer, so the play must have a very realistic base. "As in a work of art, there is nothing accidental or haphazard about a dream. . . . Dreams may or may not be expressive of external reality, but they are always completely expressive of the dreamer's own inner reality."¹¹

In The Ghost Sonata, the student experiences in a dream what many of us experience in life. He becomes aware of more than his idealistic fantasies. He matures. The dream form in which Strindberg chose to express this growth is particularly apt because so often we

⁸Strindberg, A Dream Play and The Ghost Sonata, Corrigan intro., p. xx.

⁹Carl Enoch William Leonard Dahlstrom, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1930), p. 62.

¹⁰Strindberg, The Chamber Plays, Sprinchorn intro., p. xix.

¹¹Strindberg, A Dream Play and The Ghost Sonata, Corrigan intro., p. xiv.

live in dreams, our realities are dreams, and many may never wake up. The first scene is the student rediscovering an ideal father in whom he places the faith of a child. And this second father introduces him to the woman of his dreams--beautiful and rich. Then in the second scene, the horror of how the student's real father was put in a mad-house is recapitulated with the destruction of his second father. The third scene is the discovery that love and beauty carry many responsibilities and much pain with them. The entire play is the discovery of the pain of disillusionment for the student. The style of the production must arise from the content and dictate a form.

Form and content are inseparable, identical, one. A dream is not a representation of something other than itself; more accurately, it is a structure of relationships in which meaning is a function of form, and form is its own meaning.¹²

To achieve this dream style, the director will start with the realistic qualities of the play. None of the characters are aware of the distortions and schisms within the three scenes except the student. This arises from the script. The only character who questions the contradictions is the student. The mood of the play is directly associated with this dream quality. There is no climax or denouement, there is only this constantly changing ephemeral world. To achieve this world--again this arises from the script--there are pauses in which nothing is said through words, but everything is said through pantomime or music. The dream mood is acquired through a total sensory experience. In a dream, one is taken away from the everyday and placed

¹²Ibid., p. xvi.

in a situation so abstracted from life that one is confronted with every sensory level.

What holds a chamber play together is not plot but theme and mood. . . . In each case the mood must be imposed on the man in the audience with such force that he will no more think of questioning what is happening than he would think of questioning what happens in his nightmares.¹³

To achieve this mood, the director will use the script implemented by music, slides, and pantomime. And after the beginning of the first scene, the student no longer questions, but becomes a part of the dream until the end when he wakes up.

To enhance the style of the play, the director has chosen certain theatrical elements that take the play out of the realistic vein. The beauty of the play--maturation can be beautiful--comes with as simple a framework as possible. The set will be skeletal, all props will be mimed, the furniture will be sparse, and there will not be gimmicks superimposed on the actor. The blocking, pantomime, music, and lighting are justified through the script in hopes that a style will emerge. The director believes that the style is only justifiable if it comes from the play.

One last element of style is particularly relevant to this production of The Ghost Sonata, the element of stylistic unity. One of the primary themes of the play is noncommunication, the ineffectuality of words. Since the director feels that in order to convey noncommunication, there must be communication, she will emphasize the idea of ensemble acting. Through sensory, communication, and relaxation exercises, the cast will learn to work from themselves and with each other.

¹³Strindberg, The Chamber Plays, Sprinchorn intro., p. xii.

Noncommunication comes from the fears and frustrations and failures in the attempt to communicate. In trying to know themselves and each other, the cast will be able to see the frustration of failures and experience the joy that occurs when there is communication. This is the most difficult element to achieve because of the communication breakdowns that our society has come to tolerate.

Character Description and Analysis

In order to make the characters come alive for the actors, the director will try to relate the characters to a modern concept of a person. Many of the characters are based on their psychological relevance in the play so that the actor will have relevant motivation for his character. In general, the director has divided the characters into classes: the rich, the servant, the poor, and the middle class of which the student is the only representative. Since the decline of the upper class, the upsurge of the lower class, and the emergence of a middle class were particularly relevant in 1907 and are relevant today, the director has separated the characters into these classes physically just as they are separated in the script. In the ensuing character descriptions, this separation will be more clear. Many of the characters have at one time been members of a different class. Much of the hostility and fear in the play arises from either the fear of losing one's high position or the hostility of having one's high position taken away. Many of the conflicts in the script arise from class rivalry and class consciousness.

The Upper Class

The upper class is degenerate, dying, and inbred. There is a certain amount of decorum and comportment, but it is false.

Hummel, the old man. Hummel is much like Don Corleone in The Godfather. He has position and money and power. He can be evil or good, depending on which is the shortest route to more power. He walks a tight line between truth and lies. Since his son is a homosexual, his daughter is his only hope of perpetrating his life, so he must woo the student for her. He uses flattery and friendship to win the student. Although he is eighty, his mind is always clicking. He has set up his life as a sham and he must be quick enough to maintain it. Physically, he is like a spider, moving around in his wheelchair or on crutches quietly and agilely. Hummel is described by his servant; Johanson says of him, "He's so many things, and he's been everything."¹⁴ He hangs himself because of the disgrace of being shamed by his deeds in front of his social peers whom he has stripped. The death of Hummel comes when his evil deeds become known.

The Mummy. The Mummy is the mother of the young girl and Hummel is the father. Hummel won the Mummy through deceptions. She became so overwrought with their guilt that she assumes the manners of a parrot and sits in a closet everyday. This physical exaggeration is Strindberg's way of portraying madness. Her servant, Bengtsson, says that she is crazy.¹⁵ The Mummy is much like the societal housewife of the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 125.

day who cannot cope with her life so she takes tranquilizers. However, after Hummel strips her husband, the Colonel, of his money, pride, and position, she is able to gather her courage enough to lead the final attack on Hummel. Strindberg felt most inadequate and most driven to distraction by his wives and perhaps this is why he has her become stronger than Hummel. Strindberg loved women ideally and romantically, but once he brought them home, he could not cope with their domesticity. He felt that women made him feminine just as the Mummy makes Hummel become a parrot like she has been.¹⁶ Therefore, he created in the Mummy the beautiful, elegantly comported woman of society in contrast to the parrot-like shrew of the household.

The Colonel. The Colonel is the husband of the Mummy, but he has never had her love. He is not the real father of the young girl, he is not really a colonel, and he is not a nobleman. Hummel comes to the ghost supper with the intent to strip the Colonel of his false name, title, and fatherhood. This stripping is so severe because the Colonel lives in a total fantasy world. The things that are most important to him--the military, money, and his daughter--are not his. He is much like the retired colonel of today who still thinks that a man with long hair is a sissy.

The Lady in Black. The Lady in Black is another facet of the Strindbergian female. She is beautiful and feminine, but fickle and immoral. She is having an affair with another woman's husband, the Baron. She is pregnant--Strindberg always feared that his first child

¹⁶Dahlstrom, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism, p. 198.

was not sired by him. Physically, the Lady in Black is much like the thirty year old Jacqueline Kennedy.

Baron Skanskoy. The Baron is the modern day businessman who has a woman on the side, but is afraid his position will suffer if he leaves his wife. He is vain, gutless, and edgy.

The Fiancée. The Fiancée was the fiancée of Hummel, but she is now seventy-nine, senile, and unaware of anything around her except some sounds and movements. She is rat-like.

The Dead Man, formerly a Consul. The Consul is dead because Hummel stripped him of everything he had. When he was alive, he was vain and selfish like Hummel. After he dies, he is still trying to win political alliances because the Student sees him go to receive the blessings of the poor. He is much like today's politician who kisses hungry babies and feeds his own dogs steaks.

Adele, the Young Lady. Adele is the daughter of Hummel and the Mummy; she has inherited their social sicknesses. She is being drained by her social position. She wants the student to take her away from the sham of the decadent upper classes, but she has had to do all the housework and does not want to be tied to babies and dishes. She is one of the early liberated women that Strindberg hated for ". . . masculinity, infidelity, competitiveness, and unmatured attitudes . . ."17 She is the girl of today who hates being a debutante but does it to please her parents. "She [Adele] is called the hyacinth girl and the hyacinth apparently symbolizes the beautiful, but soulless womanhood

¹⁷Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 97.

which he had described in Miss Julie . . ."¹⁸ When the student tries to save her by making her consciously aware of the rottenness that she is living in, she dies.

The Servant Class

The servant class is sucking the life from the upper class. They know the deepest secrets of the upper class and most of them were either closely allied with or were members of the upper class. They do not have the moral responsibility nor the social consciousness of the upper class and will stop at nothing to take care of themselves. They are much like our "red-necks" or blue collar workers. They are either unsuccessfully pretending to be better than they are or begrudgingly accepting their place and using it for their own advancement.

The Superintendent's Wife. The Superintendent's Wife bore the Lady in Black by the Consul. She is weasel-like, trying to insure her daughter's position in society. She is today's social climber.

The Superintendent. The Superintendent is merely lucky. He has his position only because of his wife. He is the little tin soldier--trying to be authoritative like the Colonel.

Johansson. Johansson is the most intelligent, cynical, and dangerous of all the servants. He was once a bookseller, but was enslaved by Hummel. He is as crafty and sly as Hummel. Perhaps he is Jean in Miss Julie as an old man. He feels superior to everyone.

Bengtsson. Bengtsson is the manservant in the Colonel's home. He is not too intelligent and accepts his job and the strangeness of

¹⁸Maurice Valency, The Flower and The Castle (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1963), p. 353.

his situation as the only way. He prefers to be alone. The final stripping of Hummel is done by Bengtsson who was once Hummel's master and once his servant. He is the worker of today, who eats, sleeps, works, drinks beer while watching television and never thinks.

The Housemaid. The Housemaid is a young girl who torments Adele (the young lady) because she is jealous of her. She never does her work properly because she is too tired from partying the night before. She finds the upper class ridiculous and contemptible. She is strong and buxom. She is like the sluggish, aggressive dimstore clerk.

The Cook. The Cook is the most sinister and sensuous of all the characters. She is draining the strength from the food and then serving the upper class the stock. She is the huge monster woman that Strindberg fantasized was draining his strength. "He [Strindberg] was convinced that his cook starved him by extracting the nourishing juices from his food before they served it to him."¹⁹ While writing The Ghost Sonata, Strindberg went through six servants in seven weeks.²⁰ She is the most sensuous because her obese presence makes the student aware that his ideal and emotional senses are inadequate for the situation. Her overbearing sensuousness drives him into an intellectual corner. She portrays the animal grossness of sex so heavily that he must reject sexuality altogether and cannot save the Young Lady. The Cook drains him of his innocent youth.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 253.

²⁰F. L. Lucas, The Drama of Ibsen and Strindberg (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1962), p. 450.

The Poor

The beggars are the main support of the upper class. They are hungry and will do anything for food or a few cents. They follow the Consul until he dies and then latch on to Hummel until he dies. The script does not call for specific characters in the beggars, but to facilitate the reality of the characters, they were each given specific characters. They are: a young girl, a prostitute, an old woman, a drunk, and a blind man.

The Milkmaid, the Statue, and the Student

The Milkmaid, the Statue, and the Student are each in a special class. They will be described separately.

The Milkmaid. The Milkmaid is a young country girl, pure and innocent, who was drowned by Hummel because she knew one of his crimes. She is dead, but a free animal spirit.

The Statue. The Statue is a statue of the Mummy as a young girl--elegant, beautiful, feeling, and alive. Strindberg did not write the Statue in as a live actor. The director chooses to have the Statue be alive to enhance the idea of the contradictions in the characters. The most alive character in the house is a statue. She is a point of identification for all of the members of the household. Strindberg has all of the household relate to her at some time. She is the life that the Mummy has lost.

The Student. The Student is the representative of the rising middle class. He is eager, clumsy, and innocent. He is much like the young Strindberg. The Student's father went bankrupt when he was very

young, just as Strindberg's father went bankrupt when he was four years old.²¹ And just as Strindberg could not handle domesticity, the Student is disillusioned by, and loses his sensual masculinity because of, the Young Lady's household problems. Most important is the fact that the Student cannot accept the sham of the social structure, just as Strindberg criticized his own country's social mores. In The Ghost Sonata, the Student must start from blind eager innocence and mature into an understanding intellectual. He is the most realistic of all the characters and the identification point for the audience. His dream is The Ghost Sonata.

Setting Analysis

The Ghost Sonata takes place on a street in front of an old house in Stockholm in 1907 for the characters in the play. But it takes place in the mind of the dreamer for the audience. Therefore, total realism would be a mistake. " . . . Strindberg works on the assumption that the world beyond his imagination has no fixed form or truth. It becomes 'real' only when observed through the subjective eyes of the beholder. . . ."²² Dreams are filled with symbols and fragments, so the director and the designer intend to use a skeletal set, multi-leveled to enhance the multi-faceted play. And the mood of the play must arise out of the dream quality. The situation in the play is ephemeral and mystical and realistically grotesque. And only

²¹Martin Lamm, August Strindberg, trans. and ed. by Harry A. Carlson (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1971), p. 488.

²²Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 95.

the dreamer is aware of the contradictions. The mood the director wishes to create is best described in a letter to the director from the translator, Evert Sprinchorn, " . . . all I can suggest is that you make it as beautiful as possible, beautiful to look at, beautiful to hear, as eerily beautiful as one of the last Beethoven sonatas."²³

Justification

The choice to direct The Ghost Sonata and the choice of Mr. Sprinchorn's translation arose from the director's interpretation of the play. It is not a popular modern play with a simple or light theme. The audience cannot sit back and be entertained. They must become involved in the dream with all their beings. The play arose from the great turmoil of August Strindberg's mind, but it is a universal turmoil which continually plagues mankind--human existence with all its joy and pain.

Strindberg is the supreme universalist of our modern era. With all the virile force of his personality, the richness of his temperament as an artist, Strindberg is in essence an analyst, a research-worker in the domain of the human spirit.²⁴

The Ghost Sonata is a universal dream and a universal reality about loss of innocence and maturation. The production must combine the reality and fantasy of a dream. Through a combination of all of the theatrical aspects at hand--lights, music, movement, costumes, setting, actors, and Strindberg's words--the dream mood must capture the

²²Personal letter from Evert Sprinchorn whose translation of The Ghost Sonata is being used in this production, November 17, 1971.

²³Henderson, European Dramatists, p. 70.

audience and give them a total experience that is larger than each individual.

PART II

PROMPT BOOK

PART II

PROMPT BOOK

SCENE I

(AS THE HOUSE LIGHTS GO DOWN, MUSIC AND STAGE LIGHTS COME UP. AFTER 3 SECONDS OF MUSIC, HUMMEL ENTERS DOWN LEFT IN HIS WHEELCHAIR. HE STUDIES THE HOUSE FOR A MOMENT, THEN STOPS DOWN CENTER AND MIMES READING A NEWS-PAPER. HE READS INTENTLY BECAUSE THE STORY OF THE STUDENT IS IN THE NEWS-PAPER. HE DOESN'T NOTICE ANY MOVEMENT AROUND HIM UNTIL STUDENT ENTERS.

STATUE ENTERS FROM AROUND LEFT BACK OF HOUSE, GOES IN FRONT DOOR, UP TO STATUE ROOM, SITS ON HER PEDESTAL FROZEN IN PLACE. SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE STATUE, DEAD MAN ENTERS UP RIGHT VIA BACK STAIR CASE, GOES TO HIS ROOM AND SITS BEHIND DEATH SCREEN.

COLONEL ENTERS THROUGH BACK DOOR OF KITCHEN UP LEFT, MIMES GOING OVER THE SUPERINTENDENT'S LEDGER ON THE KITCHEN TABLE, THEN GOES TO HIS ROOM, MIMES TAKING A BOOK FROM THE SHELF, THEN SITS TO READ IT AND FREEZES. SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE COLONEL, THE FIANCEE ENTERS UP RIGHT VIA BACK STAIRCASE, GOES TO HER ROOM, SITS, STRAIGHTENS HER CLOTHING, THEN FREEZES.

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE ENTERS UP LEFT THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR FOLLOWED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT. HE SITS AT UP CENTER CHAIR OF KITCHEN TABLE, MIMES FIGURING IN HIS BOOK, FREEZES. THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE GOES THROUGH THE HOUSE YAWNING, OPENS FRONT DOOR, REACTS TO HEAT, STEPS DOWN TO OUTSIDE AND MIMES CLEANING THE WOODWORK. SHE FREEZES IN POSITION.

THE HOUSEMAID ENTERS UP LEFT THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR, CROSSES RIGHT TO HYACINTH ROOM, STRAIGHTENS UP A BIT, THEN SITS ON COUCH, MIMES THUMBING THROUGH BOOK, THEN FREEZES. SIMULTANEOUSLY THE LADY IN BLACK ENTERS UP LEFT VIA BACK STAIRCASE, GOES THROUGH GHOST SUPPER ROOM TO FRONT DOOR TO WAIT FOR HER LOVER, THE BARON. SHE FREEZES ON FRONT STEP.

THE MILKMAID ENTERS UP RIGHT FROM BEHIND BLACKS, MIMING A BUCKET. SHE WALKS VERY LIGHTLY AND SLOWLY TO GIVE THE ILLUSION OF BEING A GHOST. SHE REACTS TO THE HEAT BY WIPING HER BROW, GOES TO WELL, LOOKS AT HER REFLECTION IN THE WATER, MIMES SPLASHING COOL WATER ON HER FACE, THEN MIMES TAKING A CUP FROM LEFT SIDE OF WELL AND GETTING A DRINK OF WATER.

THE MUSIC STOPS. THE STUDENT ENTERS DOWN LEFT FROM BEHIND BLACKS ON THE STAGE EXTREME LEFT. HE SEES THE HOUSE AS IF IT WERE OUT OF A FAIRY TALE, NOTICES THE MILKMAID AND THE WELL, CROSSES RIGHT TO LEFT OF WELL. HUMMEL BOWS TO HIM AS HE PASSES.) (FIGURE 1)

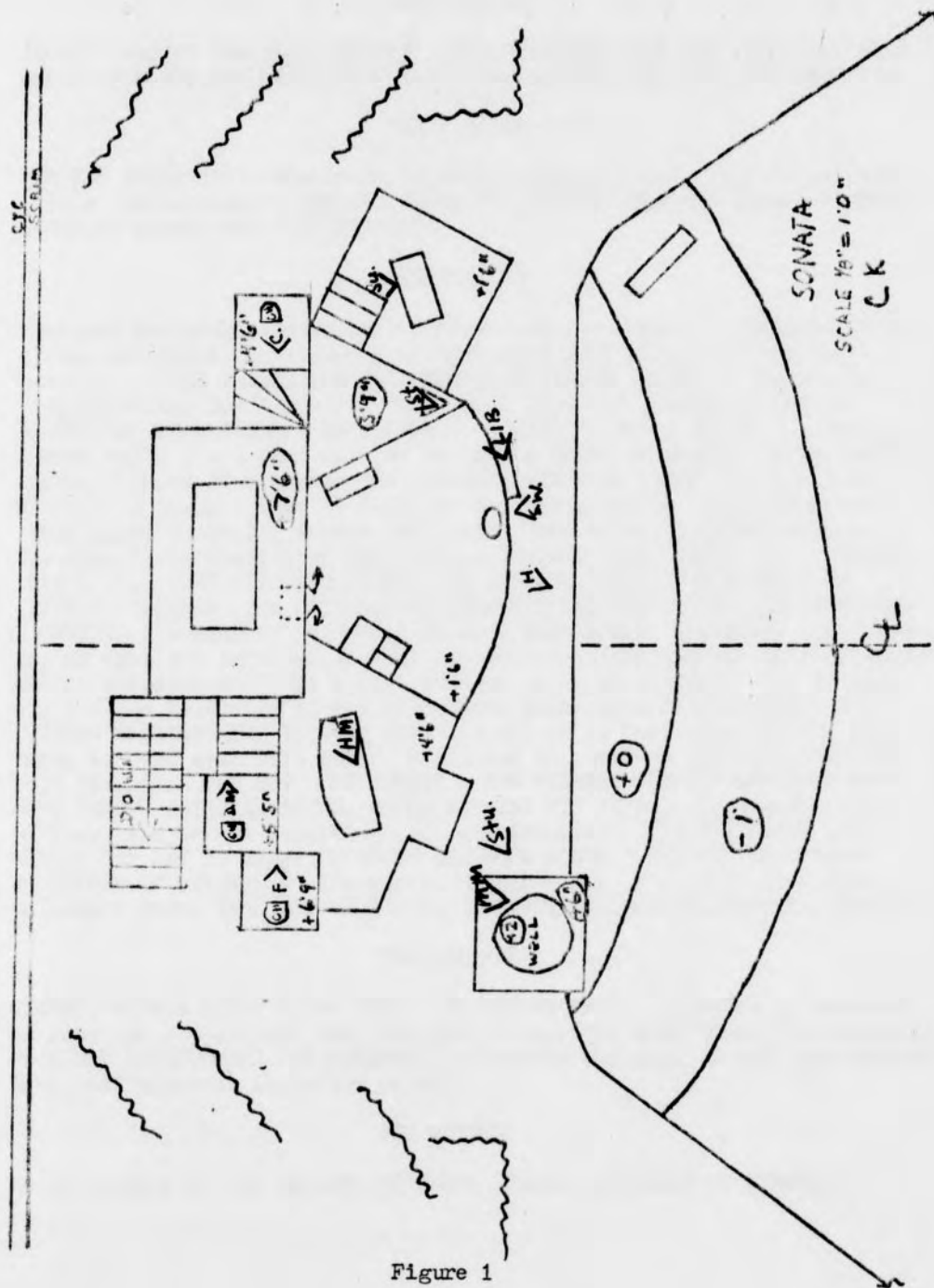


Figure 1

THE STUDENT

Could I borrow the cup, please? (THE MILKMAID HUGS THE CUP TO HERSELF.)
Aren't you through using it? (THE MILKMAID STARES AT HIM IN TERROR.)

THE OLD MAN

(TO THE AUDIENCE.) Who on earth is he talking to?-- I don't see anyone!-- Is he crazy? (HE CONTINUES TO STARE AT THEM IN AMAZEMENT BECAUSE HE CANNOT SEE THE MILKMAID.)

THE STUDENT

What are you looking at? Do I look so awful?-- Well, I haven't slept a wink all night, I suppose you think that I've been out doing the town . . . (THE MILKMAID STILL STARES AT HIM IN TERROR.) Think I've been drinking, don't you?-- Do I smell like it? (STEPS CLOSER TO MILKMAID. THE MILKMAID AS BEFORE.) I haven't had a chance to shave, I know that. . . . Come on, let me have a drink of water. After last night, I think I've earned it. (PAUSE, STEPS BACK LEFT TO TELL THE STORY.) I guess I have to tell you the whole story. I've spent the whole night bandaging wounds and taking care of the injured people. You see, I was there when the house collapsed last night. . . . Well, that's it. (THE MILKMAID RINSES THE CUP AND OFFERS HIM A DRINK OF WATER.) Thanks! (HE DRINKS; THE MILKMAID DOES NOT MOVE. HE CONTINUES SLOWLY.) I wonder if you would do me a big favor? (PAUSE.) The thing is, my eyes are inflamed, as you can see--but I've had my hands on wounds and on corpses--so I don't want to risk using my hands to wash my eyes. . . . I was wondering if you would take this clean handkerchief, (INDICATES HANDKERCHIEF IN LEFT POCKET.) dip it in that fresh water, and bathe my poor eyes with it?-- Would you do that?-- Will you play the Good Samaritan for me? (HE KNEELS. THE MILKMAID HESITATES FOR A MOMENT BEFORE DOING AS ASKED, MIMES WASHING HIS EYES.) That's very kind of you. And here's something for your trouble-- (HE HAS TAKEN HIS WALLET OUT AND IS ABOUT TO OFFER HER SOME MONEY. THE MILKMAID MAKES A GESTURE OF REFUSAL.) I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'm still in a daze. (MILKMAID EXITS BACK OFF UP RIGHT. STUDENT FOLLOWS MILKMAID UP RIGHT.)

THE OLD MAN

(HUMMEL WHEELS RIGHT THREE FEET. TO THE STUDENT.) Forgive my speaking to you, but I could not help hearing you say you were in on that terrible accident (FLATTERING THE STUDENT.) yesterday evening. I was just sitting here reading about it in the paper.

THE STUDENT

Is it already in the paper? (STUDENT CROSSES UP RIGHT TO HUMMEL.)

THE OLD MAN

The whole story! And they've got a picture of you too. But they regret that they were unable to obtain the name of the courageous young student. . . . (HUMMEL PLAYING UP TO STUDENT'S EGO.)

THE STUDENT

(TAKES PAPER FROM HUMMEL, SITS ON LEFT OF HUMMEL. LOOKING AT THE PAPER.) So that's me! What do you know.

THE OLD MAN

Who . . . who was that you were talking to just now?

THE STUDENT

(INTO NEWSPAPER.) Didn't you see? (PAUSE.)

THE OLD MAN

(HUMMEL WHEELS AROUND TO RIGHT OF STUDENT.) I suppose I'm being nosey, but would you do me the honor of giving me your name?

THE STUDENT

Why do you want to know that? I don't care for publicity. First they praise you, then they blame you. Running people down has been built up into one of the fine arts. Besides, I'm not looking for any reward.

THE OLD MAN

Rich, I suppose?

THE STUDENT

(STANDS, INDICATES EMPTY POCKET.) Not at all! I haven't got a dime to my name.

THE OLD MAN

It's strange . . . but I can't help thinking I've heard your voice before. . . . When I was a young man I had a friend who couldn't pronounce window, he always said winder. I've only met one person who said that, and that was him. The other is you, of course. Is it possible that you are related to Arkenholz, the wholesale dealer?

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES RIGHT TO HUMMEL.) He was my father.

THE OLD MAN

Isn't fate strange? Then I have seen you when you were a child--under very difficult circumstances.

THE STUDENT

I suppose so. I understand I came into the world right in the middle of bankruptcy proceedings. (CROSSES DOWN LEFT.)

THE OLD MAN

Exactly!

THE STUDENT

May I ask what your name is?

THE OLD MAN

My name is Hummel.

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT, THINKING; KEEPS BACK TO HUMMEL.) Hummel? Then you're-- Yes, I remember. . . . (BITTER.)

THE OLD MAN

You've heard my name mentioned in your family?

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO BENCH DOWN LEFT AND SITS.) Yes.

THE OLD MAN

And mentioned, perhaps, with a certain antipathy? (THE STUDENT REMAINS SILENT.) I can well imagine! . . . No doubt you heard that I was the man who ruined your father? . . . (HUMMEL CROSSES LEFT TO STUDENT.) Everyone who is ruined by stupid speculations come to realize sooner or later that he was actually ruined by someone he couldn't fool. (PAUSE.) The truth of the matter is that your father fleeced me of seventeen thousand crowns, every cent I had saved up at the time.

THE STUDENT

It's remarkable how the same story can be told in two exactly opposite ways.

THE OLD MAN

Surely you don't think I'm being untruthful?

THE STUDENT

(TURNS TO HUMMEL.) What do you think? My father didn't lie.

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES CLOSER TO STUDENT.) That's true, a father never lies. . . .
But I too am a father, and consequently . . .

THE STUDENT

What're you getting at?

THE OLD MAN

I saved your father from the worst possible misery, and he repaid me with all the terrible hatred of a man who feels obliged to be grateful. He taught his family to speak ill of me.

THE STUDENT

(STANDS, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, TURNS BACK TO HUMMEL.) Maybe you made him ungrateful. The help you gave him was probably poisoned with unnecessary humiliations.

THE OLD MAN

My dear young man, all help is humiliating.

THE STUDENT

What do you want of me?

THE OLD MAN

Don't worry, I'm not asking for the money back. But if you would render me a few small services, I would consider myself well repaid. (HUMMEL CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE.) You see that I'm a cripple-- some say it's my own fault--others blame my parents--personally I blame it all on life itself, with all its traps--in avoiding one you fall right into the next one. Anyway, (TURNS TO STUDENT.) I can't run up and down stairs--can't even pull bell cords. (TURNS AWAY FROM STUDENT, PATHETICALLY.) And so I ask you: help me!

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES HALFWAY TO HUMMEL.) What can I do?

THE OLD MAN

Well, first of all you might give my chair a push so that I can read the posters. (INDICATES POSTERS UP RIGHT.) I want to see what's playing tonight.

THE STUDENT

(PUSHES HUMMEL UP RIGHT TO POSTERS.) Don't you have a man who takes care of you? (STUDENT STANDS TO RIGHT OF POSTERS, HUMMEL TO LEFT.)

THE OLD MAN

Yes, but he's off on an errand. . . . Be right back. . . . You a medical student?

THE STUDENT

No, I'm studying languages. But I really don't know what I want to be.

THE OLD MAN

Aha!-- How are you at mathematics?

THE STUDENT

Fairly good.

THE OLD MAN

Good! Good!-- Would you possibly be interested in a job?

THE STUDENT

Sure, why not?

THE OLD MAN

Splendid! (READING THE POSTERS. HUMMEL WHEELS DOWN STAGE.) They're giving Die Walküre at the matinee. . . . That means that the Colonel will be there with his daughter. And since he always sits on the aisle in the sixth row, I'll put you next to him. . . . You go into that telephone booth over there (SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE AND LADY IN BLACK BEGIN MIMING TALKING AT FRONT DOOR.) and order a ticket for seat number eighty-two in the sixth row. (HUMMEL CROSSES DOWN CENTER.)

THE STUDENT

(TURNS LEFT TO HUMMEL.) You expect me to go to the opera in the middle of the day?

THE OLD MAN

(HUMMEL STOPS, TURNS BACK TO STUDENT.) That's right! Just you do as I tell you and you won't regret it. I want to see you happy--rich and respected. Your debut last night as the courageous rescuer is the beginning of your fame. From now on your very name will be a great asset.

THE STUDENT

I don't know what I'm getting into. It's crazy!

THE OLD MAN

Aren't you a gambler?

THE STUDENT

Yes, unfortunately. I always lose.

THE OLD MAN

This will change your luck!-- Go and telephone! (STUDENT CROSSES TO TELEPHONE BOOTH. HUMMEL PICKS UP HIS NEWSPAPER AND STARTS TO READ, THEN CROSSES DOWN STAGE CENTER TO LISTEN TO WOMEN. HOUSEMAID GOES INTO KITCHEN. THE OLD MAN LISTENS FURTIVELY TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE AND THE LADY IN BLACK TALKING, BUT THE AUDIENCE HEARS NOTHING. THE STUDENT RETURNS, CROSSES LEFT TO HUMMEL.) All set? (HUMMEL TURNS TO STUDENT. SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE GOES INTO KITCHEN, SITS LEFT AND MIMES SEWING.)

THE STUDENT

It's all taken care of.

THE OLD MAN

(TURNS TO HOUSE, TAKING A NEW APPROACH.) Take a look at that house.

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT ON LIFT TO LOOK AT HOUSE, BACK TO AUDIENCE.) I already have looked at it--very carefully. . . . I went by there yesterday, when the sun was glittering on the planes, and dreaming of all the beauty and luxury there must be in that house, I said to my friend, (STUDENT CROSSES TO HUMMEL, SITS ON LIFT.) "Imagine having an apartment there, four flights up, and a beautiful wife, and two pretty kids, and twenty thousand crowns in dividends every year."

THE OLD MAN

Did you now? Did you say that? Well, well! I too am very fond of that house. . . .

THE STUDENT

Do you speculate in houses?

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT. TO AUDIENCE.) Mmmm--yes! But not in the way you think. . . . (COLONEL RISES, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO STATUE AND LOOKS AT IT FROZEN.)

THE STUDENT

Do you know the people who live there?

THE OLD MAN

Every single one. At my age you know everyone, including their fathers and their grandfathers--and you always find you're related to them somehow. I've just turned eighty. . . . But no one knows me, not really. (TO AUDIENCE.) I take a great interest in human destinies. . . . (COLONEL CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO ROUND ROOM, STILL LOOKING AT STATUE.) Look, there's the Colonel! You'll sit next to him this afternoon.

THE STUDENT

Is that him--the Colonel? I don't understand anything that's going on. It's like a fairy tale.

THE OLD MAN

My whole life, my dear young man, is like a book of fairy tales. But (VERY SLOWLY AND TO THE AUDIENCE.) although the stories are different, one thread ties them all together and the same leitmotif recurs constantly.

THE STUDENT

Who is that marble statue in there?

THE OLD MAN

That's his wife, naturally. . . .

THE STUDENT

Was she so wonderful? Did he love her so much?

THE OLD MAN

Hmm yes . . . yes, of course. . . .

THE STUDENT

(EXCITED.) Well, tell me!

THE OLD MAN

Come now, you know we can't judge other people. . . . (LADY IN BLACK CROSSES LEFT OF DOOR TO TALK TO SUPERINTENDENT WHO COMES FROM KITCHEN. COLONEL SITS UP CENTER CHAIR IN ROUND ROOM.) Suppose I were to tell you that she left him, that he beat her, that she came back again and married him again, and that she is sitting in there right now like a mummy, worshiping her own statue, you would think I was crazy.

THE STUDENT

I can't understand it!

THE OLD MAN

That doesn't surprise me!-- And over there we have the hyacinth window. That's where his daughter lives. She's out riding, but she'll be home soon. . . .

THE STUDENT

(TURNS LEFT TO LADY IN BLACK.) Who's the lady in black that's talking to the caretaker?

THE OLD MAN

Well, that's a little complicated. But it's connected with the dead man upstairs, there where you see the black screen.

THE STUDENT

And who was he?

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES LEFT IN FRONT OF STUDENT.) A human being, like the rest of us. The most conspicuous thing about him was his vanity. . . . Now if you were a Sunday child, you would soon see him come out of that very door just to look at the consulate flag at half-mast for himself. Yes, you see, he was a consul. Liked nothing better than coronets and lions, plumed hats and colored ribbons.

THE STUDENT

Sunday child, did you say? I was actually born on a Sunday, so I'm told. (SUPERINTENDENT CROSSES TO KITCHEN, SUPERINTENDENT AND SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE EXIT OFF LEFT THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR.)

THE OLD MAN

Really! Are you--! I should have guessed it. I could tell by the color of your eyes. . . . But--then you can see . . . what others can't see, haven't you noticed that?

THE STUDENT

I don't know what others see. But sometimes-- Well, there are some things you don't talk about! (STUDENT RISES, CROSSES LEFT TO BENCH.)

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES TO CENTER.) I knew it, I knew it! But you can talk to me about it. I understand--things like that. . . .

THE STUDENT

Yesterday, for example. . . . I was drawn to that little side street where the house collapsed afterwards. (STUDENT RECREATES STORY OUT TO AUDIENCE.) . . . I walked down the street and stopped in front of a house that I had never seen before. . . . Then I noticed a crack in the wall. I could hear the floor beams snapping in two. I leaped forward and grabbed up a child that was walking under the wall. . . . The next moment the house collapsed. . . . I escaped--but in my arms--where I thought I had the child--there wasn't anything. . . .

THE OLD MAN

Remarkable. Remarkable. . . . I always knew that . . . But tell me something: why were you making all those gestures just now by the fountain? And why were you talking to yourself?

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES HALFWAY TO WELL.) Didn't you see the milkmaid I was talking to?

THE OLD MAN

(IN HORROR.) Milkmaid!?

THE STUDENT

Yes, of course, she handed me the cup.

THE OLD MAN

(BITTERLY.) Indeed? . . . so that's the way it is? . . . Very well, I may not have second sight, (TO THE AUDIENCE.) but I have other powers. . . . (FIANCEE STANDS, MIMES OPENING WINDOW, LOOKS OUT.) Look at the

old lady in the window! Do you see her? (STUDENT SHAKES HIS HEAD.)
 . . . Good, good! That was my fiancée--once upon a time--sixty years
 ago. (STUDENT CROSSES TO WELL AND SITS ON IT FACING HUMMEL.) . . . I
 was twenty. Don't be afraid, she doesn't recognize me. We see each
 other every day, but it doesn't mean a thing to me--although we once
 vowed to love each other forever. Forever!

THE STUDENT

(SITS ON LEFT SIDE OF WELL.) How foolish you were in those days! Nowa-
 days we don't tell girls things like that.

THE OLD MAN

Forgive us, young man. We didn't know any better! . . . But you can
 see that that old woman was once young and beautiful?

THE STUDENT

No, I can't . . . (SEEING THAT HUMMEL IS HURT.) Well, maybe. I like
 the way she turns her head to look at things . . . I can't see her eyes.
 (FIANCEE FREEZES. SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE ENTERS FROM LEFT, PUTS MIMED
 NEWSPAPER INSIDE DOOR, THEN FREEZES IN CONVERSATION WITH LADY IN BLACK.
 COLONEL CROSSES TO DOOR AND GETS NEWSPAPER, CROSSES INTO ROUND ROOM AND
 SITS TO READ IT.)

THE OLD MAN

Aha, the wife of the superintendent! (FIGURE 2) The lady in black is
 her daughter by the dead man upstairs. (CROSSES TO STUDENT.) That's
 why her husband got the job as superintendent. . . . (ENTICING THE
 STUDENT TO BECOME INVOLVED.) But the lady in black has a lover--very
 aristocratic and waiting to inherit a fortune. Right now he's in the
 process of getting a divorce--from his present wife, who is giving him
 a town house just to get rid of him. The aristocratic lover is the son-
 in-law of the dead man. Complicated, don't you think?

THE STUDENT

It's damned complicated!

THE OLD MAN

Yes, indeed it is, inside and outside, although it all looks so simple.

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO BALCONY AND PEERS OVER.) But then who is the dead man?

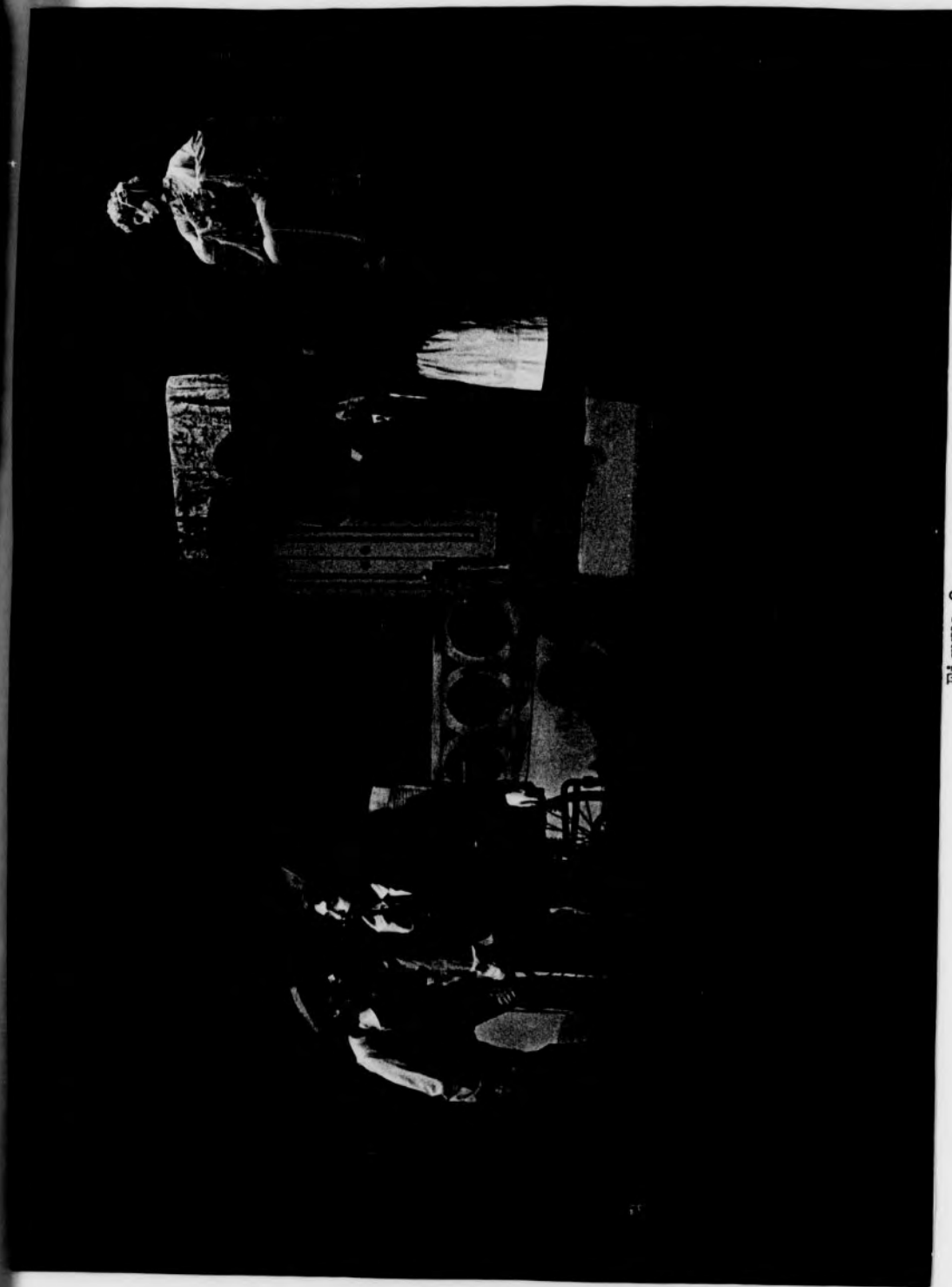


Figure 2

THE OLD MAN

You just asked me and I told you. If you could look around the corner (INDICATING AROUND THE KITCHEN.) where the service entrance is, you'd see a pack (STUDENT TURNS LEFT.) of poor people whom he used to help--when he felt like it.

THE STUDENT

Then I suppose he was a kind and charitable man?

THE OLD MAN

Oh, yes--sometimes.

THE STUDENT

Not always?

THE OLD MAN

No, that's how people are!-- Listen, will you give me a little push over there in the sun? (STUDENT CROSSES TO HUMMEL, PUSHES HIM INTO SUN DOWN RIGHT.) I'm so terribly cold. When you never get to move around, the blood congeals. (EVOKING THE STUDENT'S PITY.) I'm going to die soon, I know that. But before I do there are a few things I want to take care of. (HUMMEL TAKES STUDENT'S HAND.) Feel my hand, just feel how cold I am. (LIGHTS DOWN EXCEPT FOR GREEN CYCLORAMA AND GREEN POOL AROUND STUDENT AND HUMMEL. MUSIC BEGINS.)

THE STUDENT

My god! It's unbelievable! (HE TRIES TO FREE HIS HAND BUT HUMMEL HOLDS ON TO IT.)

THE OLD MAN

Don't leave me, I beg you--I'm tired, I'm lonely--but it hasn't always been this way, I tell you. (PLEADING INTENSELY AS IF DRAWING THE STUDENT INTO A TRANCE.) --I have an infinitely long life behind me--infinitely long--I've made people unhappy and people have made me unhappy, one cancels out the other. But before I die I want to make you happy. . . . Our destinies are tangled together through your father--and other things.

THE STUDENT

(GASPING AS IF HUMMEL IS DRAINING THE LIFE FROM HIM.) Let go, let go of my hand--you are drawing all my strength from me--you're freezing me to death--what do you want of me?

THE OLD MAN

(LETS GO OF STUDENT'S HAND.) Patience. (LIGHTS BACK TO NORMAL. MUSIC OFF. AS IF THE EVENT NEVER HAPPENED.) You'll soon see and understand. (YOUNG LADY ENTERS LEFT, CROSSES TO FRONT DOOR, GREET'S SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE AND LADY IN BLACK.) There she comes.--

THE STUDENT

The Colonel's daughter?

THE OLD MAN

Yes! His daughter! Just look at her!-- Have you ever seen such a masterpiece? (STATUE POSES TOWARDS YOUNG LADY.)

THE STUDENT

She looks like the marble statue in there.

THE OLD MAN

She should. That's her mother!

THE STUDENT

Incredibly beautiful! "Can woman be so fair?"

THE OLD MAN

Yes, indeed. "Happy the man whose luck it is to bear her home to wedded bliss." (YOUNG LADY CROSSES TO STATUE IN HOUSE; KISSES COLONEL. HOUSEMAID CROSSES INTO HYACINTH ROOM. SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE EXITS LEFT.) --I see you appreciate her beauty. Not everyone recognizes it. . . . Well, then, it is ordained! (STUDENT PUTS HEAD ON LAP, FRUSTRATED BY SUCH UNATTAINABLE BEAUTY.) Are you crying?

THE STUDENT

(DEAD MAN RISES AND BEGINS SLOW CROSS TO FRONT DOOR.) When I see how far beyond my reach my happiness is, what can I feel but despair?

THE OLD MAN

But I can open doors--and hearts--(RAISING HIS ARMS AS IF HE WERE A LORD OF CREATION.) if only I can find an arm to do my will. Serve me, and you shall be a lord of creation!

THE STUDENT

(FRIGHTENED.) A devil's bargain? You want me to sell my soul?

THE OLD MAN

Sell nothing! (HUMMEL CROSSES DOWN CENTER.) --Don't you understand, all my life (DESPERATELY.) I have taken, taken! Now I crave to give, to give! But nobody will take what I have to offer. I'm a rich man, very rich--and without any heirs. --Oh, yes, I have a good-for-nothing son who torments the life out of me. (PLEADING.) You could become my son, become my heir while I'm still alive, enjoy life while I'm here to see it--at least from a distance.

THE STUDENT

(STUDENT CROSSES TO HUMMEL. RESIGNED.) What do you want me to do?

THE OLD MAN

First, go and hear Die Wauktire!

THE STUDENT

That's already been taken care of. What else?

THE OLD MAN

(IMPRESSING HIM.) This evening you shall be sitting in there--in the round room!

THE STUDENT

How do you expect me to get in?

THE OLD MAN

By way of Die Walkire!

THE STUDENT

(SUSPICIOUS.) Why did you pick me for your--your medium? Did you know me before?

THE OLD MAN

Of course, of course! I've had my eyes on you for a long time. . . . (AVOIDING FURTHER SPECIFICS.) Ah! Look, (HOUSEMAID MIMES RAISING FLAG.) the maid is raising the flag to half-mast for the Consul. . . . (HOUSEMAID CROSSES TO KITCHEN.) Do you see that blue quilt? (INDICATING COUCH IN HYACINTH ROOM.) It was made for two to sleep under, and now it covers only one. . . . (THE YOUNG LADY APPEARS AT THE WINDOW TO WATER THE HYACINTHS.) There's my dear little girl. (HUMMEL CROSSES LEFT, STUDENT FOLLOWS HIM.) Look at her, just look at her! (COLONEL CROSSES TO YOUNG LADY IN HYACINTH ROOM WITH NEWSPAPER.) She's talking to the

flowers now. Isn't she just like a blue hyacinth herself? She gives them water to drink, the purest water, and they transform the water into color and perfume. (ENCOURAGING THE STUDENT.) --Here comes the Colonel with a newspaper. . . . Now he's pointing to your picture! She's reading about your heroic deeds. (LIGHTS DIM.) --It's starting to cloud over. Suppose it starts to rain? (IRRITATED.) I'll be in a pretty mess if Johansson doesn't come back soon. (FIANCEE CLOSES WINDOW, SITS FROZEN.) I see my fiancée is closing up shop. . . . Seventy-nine years. . . . (YOUNG LADY AND COLONEL SIT AND FREEZE.) That window mirror is the only mirror she ever uses. That's because she can't see herself in it, only the outside world and from two directions at once. But the world can see her. She doesn't realize that. . . . (LADY IN BLACK CROSSES DOWN LEFT OF STEPS.) All the same, not bad-looking for an old woman. (NOW, THE DEAD MAN, WRAPPED IN A WINDING SHEET, IS SEEN COMING OUT OF THE MAIN DOOR. MUSIC FOR DEAD MAN.)

THE STUDENT

(AMAZED.) Oh my god, what--?

THE OLD MAN

(HE CANNOT SEE THE DEAD MAN. EXCITED.) What do you see?

THE STUDENT

(DEAD MAN IS IN DOORWAY. EXCITED.) Don't you see? Don't you see, in the doorway, the dead man?

THE OLD MAN

No, I don't see anything. But I'm not surprised. Tell me exactly what--

THE STUDENT

He's stepping out into the street. . . . (DEAD MAN CROSSES TO DOWN STAGE RIGHT TO SEE FLAG AND STATUE. STATUE IN POSE OF MOURNING.) Now he's turning his head and looking up at the flag. (STUDENT FOLLOWS DEAD MAN.)

THE OLD MAN

What did I tell you? Watch, he will count every wreath and read every calling card. I pity whoever is missing!

THE STUDENT

Now he's turning the corner. . . . (DEAD MAN EXITS LEFT.)

THE OLD MAN

(BITTERLY.) He's gone to count the poor people at the service entrance,

The poor add such a nice touch to an obituary: "Received the blessings of the populace!" Yes, but he won't receive my blessings!-- (HOSTILE.) Just between us, he was a big scoundrel.

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES BACK TO HUMMEL.) But benevolent.

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES LEFT.) A benevolent scoundrel. Always thinking of his own magnificent funeral. . . . When he could feel his end was near, he embezzled fifty thousand crowns from the state. . . . Now his daughter is running around with another woman's husband and wondering about the will. . . . (YELLING IS HEARD OFF STAGE.) The scoundrel can hear every word we're saying. I hope he gets an earful! (JOHANSSON ENTERS FROM THE LEFT.) Here's Johansson. (DEMANDING.) Report! (JOHANSSON CROSSES RIGHT TO HUMMEL AND MIMES SPEAKING TO HIM, BUT THE AUDIENCE CANNOT HEAR WHAT HE SAYS. STUDENT CROSSES DOWN CENTER.) What do you mean, not at home? You're an ass! (JOHANSSON CROSSES RIGHT, HUMMEL CROSSES TO JOHANSSON.) What about the telegram?-- Not a word! . . . (IMPATIENTLY.) go on, go on! . . . (JOHANSSON CIRCLES HUMMEL.) six o'clock this evening? That's good! --An extra edition? --With all the details about him? . . . Arkenholz, student . . . born . . . his parents . . . (VERY PLEASED.) Splendid! . . . It's beginning to rain, I think. . . . And what did he say? . . . Really, really! --He didn't want to? Well, he's going to have to! --Here comes the Baron, or whatever he is! --Push me around the corner, Johansson. I want to hear what the poor people are saying. --And Arkenholz! Don't go away. Do you understand? (COLONEL CROSSES TO HIS ROOM. THE YOUNG LADY CROSSES TO BALCONY.) --Well, come on, come on, what are you waiting for! (JOHANSSON PUSHES HUMMEL OFF RIGHT. THE STUDENT HAS TURNED TO LOOK AT THE YOUNG LADY WHO IS LOOSENING THE EARTH IN THE HYACINTH POTS. BARON ENTERS RIGHT, CROSSES TO LADY IN BLACK. THEY GREET, CROSS TO BENCH AND SIT.)

BARON SKANSKORG

(TRYING TO CALM HER.) What can we do about it? We simply have to wait.

LADY IN BLACK

(INTENSELY. But I can't wait, don't you understand?

BARON SKANSKORG

Well, if that's the way it is, you'll have to go to the country.

LADY IN BLACK

(CHILDISHLY.) I don't want to do that!

BARON SKANSKORG

Come over here. Otherwise they'll hear what we're saying. (BARON AND LADY IN BLACK CROSS TO POSTERS, AND CONTINUE THEIR MIMED CONVERSATION UNHEARD BY THE AUDIENCE. STUDENT WATCHES THEM. JOHANSSON ENTERS LEFT, CROSSES TO STUDENT.)

JOHANSSON

(TO THE STUDENT.) My master asks you not to forget that other matter. . .

THE STUDENT

(RISES. WARILY.) Just a minute--I want to know something first. Tell me, exactly what is your employer's business?

JOHANSSON

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT ON LIFT. SMUGLY.) What can I say? He's so many things, and he's been everything.

THE STUDENT

He's not crazy, is he?

JOHANSSON

(AS IF THE STUDENT WERE AN IDIOT.) What does it mean to be crazy? All his life he's been looking for a Sunday child. (TRYING TO CONFUSE HIM.) That's what he says--but he might be making it up. . . . (JOHANSSON SITS ON BENCH.)

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO JOHANSSON.) What's he after? Money?

JOHANSSON

Power. --All day long he rides around in his chariot like the great god Thor. . . . (TRYING TO SCARE THE STUDENT.) He keeps his eye on houses, tears them down, opens up streets, builds up city squares. (RISES, CROSSES TO STUDENT AND CIRCLES HIM.) But he also breaks into houses, sneaks in through the windows, ravages human lives, kills his enemies, and forgives nothing and nobody. . . . (CROSSES LEFT.) Can you imagine that that little cripple was once a Don Juan. But no woman would ever stick with him.

THE STUDENT

Sounds inconsistent.

JOHANSSON

Oh, no. You see, he was so sly that he knew how to get the women to leave when he got bored with them. But that was a long time ago. (CROSSES TO STUDENT AND CIRCLES HIM.) (BITTERLY.) Now he's more like a horse thief at a slave market. He steals people--in more ways than one. . . . He literally stole me out of the hands of the law. (CROSSES LEFT.) I made a little mistake--that's all--and he was the only one who knew about it. But instead of putting me in jail, he made me his slave. I slave for him just for my food--which isn't the best in the world.

THE STUDENT

What's he go up his sleeve? What's he want to do in this house?

JOHANSSON

I wouldn't want to say! I wouldn't even know where to begin!

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES LEFT.) I think I'd better get out while the getting is good. (YOUNG LADY MIMES DROPPING BRACELET.)

JOHANSSON

(ENTICING THE STUDENT NOT TO LEAVE.) Look at the young lady! She's dropped her bracelet out of the window. (THE STUDENT CROSSES TO WINDOW AND RETURNS THE BRACELET. HE STARES AT HER. SHE REMAINS ALOOF. JOHANSSON CROSSES TO STUDENT, PULLS HIM AWAY FROM THE YOUNG LADY; THEY CROSS LEFT.) I thought you said you were leaving. It isn't as easy as you think once he has slipped his net over your head. . . . And he's afraid of nothing between heaven and earth (BAITING THE STUDENT TO FIND OUT WHAT HE KNOWS.)--Yes, one thing--or rather one person.

THE STUDENT

I bet I know.

JOHANSSON

How can you know?

THE STUDENT

Just guessing! Could it be . . . he's afraid of a little Milkmaid?

JOHANSSON

He turns his head away whenever he sees a milk wagon. . . . Sometimes he talks in his sleep. He must have been in Hamburg once. . . .

THE STUDENT

Can I depend on him?

JOHANSSON

You can depend on him--to do anything and everything!

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES LEFT TO SEE HUMMEL.) What's he up to around the corner?

JOHANSSON

(CROSSES AFTER STUDENT.) Eavesdropping on the poor. . . . Planting a word here and there, chipping away at one stone at a time--until the whole house falls--metaphorically speaking. (STUDENT LOOKS AMAZED THAT A SERVANT COULD USE SUCH INTELLIGENT LANGUAGE.) Oh, yes, I've had an education. And I used to be a bookseller. . . . Are you leaving or staying?

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO JOHANSSON.) I don't like to be ungrateful. This man once saved my father, and all he's asking for now is a little favor in return.

JOHANSSON

What is that?

THE STUDENT

He wants me to go and see Die Walküre.

JOHANSSON

That's beyond me. . . . He's always got something up his sleeve. . . . Look at him, (CROSSES LEFT IN FRONT OF STUDENT.) he's talking to the policeman. He's always in with the police. He makes use of them, gets them involved in his business, ties them hand and foot with false promises of future possibilities. And all the while he's pumping them, pumping them. --Mark my words, before the night is over he'll be received in the round room.

THE STUDENT

What does he want in there? What's he got to do with the Colonel?

JOHANSSON

I'm not sure, but I've got my ideas. You'll be able to see for yourself when you go there!

THE STUDENT

I'll never get in there. . . .

JOHANSSON

That depends on you! Go to Die Walküre.

THE STUDENT

Is that the way?

JOHANSSON

If he said so, it is! (MUSIC BEGINS. DISGUSTEDLY.) Look at him, just look at him! Riding his war chariot, drawn in triumph by the beggars, who don't get a cent for it, just a hint that something might come their way at his funeral! (HUMMEL ENTERS DOWN LEFT WITH THE BEGGARS, THE CHILD BEGGAR FIRST, FOLLOWED BY HUMMEL STANDING IN WHEELCHAIR PUSHED BY THE DRUNK BEGGAR. THEN OLD LADY BEGGAR LEADS BLIND BEGGAR ON, FOLLOWED BY PROSTITUTE BEGGAR. ALL MOVE DOWN CENTER. THE STUDENT FADES DOWN RIGHT.)

THE OLD MAN

(AS IF AT A POLITICAL RALLY.) Let us hail the noble youth, who risked his own life to save so many in yesterday's accident! Hail Arkenholz! (HOUSEMAID STANDS IN KITCHEN, FREEZES WAVING. FIANCEE STANDS AT WINDOW, FREEZES WAVING. YOUNG LADY STANDS ON BALCONY, FREEZES WAVING. THE COLONEL STANDS AND SALUTES.) (WITH FERVOR.) Hail the hero, my fellow citizens! I know indeed it is Sunday, but the ass in the pit and the ear in the field absolve us. And though I may not be a Sunday child, I can see into the future and I can heal the sick. (BRAGGING.) I have even brought a drowned soul back to life. . . . That happened in Hamburg, yes, on a Sunday morning, just like this--(MUSIC OUT. MILKMAID ENTERS RIGHT, SEEN ONLY BY THE STUDENT AND THE OLD MAN. SHE STRETCHES HER ARMS ABOVE HER HEAD LIKE A DROWNING PERSON AND STARES FIXEDLY AT HUMMEL. HUMMEL SITS DOWN AND SHRIVELS UP IN FEAR AND TERROR.) (FIGURE 3.) (GASPING.) Get me out of here, Johansson! (JOHANSSON WHEELS HIM OFF LEFT.) Quick--Arkenholz, don't you forget Die Walküre!

THE STUDENT

What is all this? (RUNS OFF LEFT AFTER HUMMEL.)



Figure 3



Figure 3

JOHANSSON

We shall see! We shall see! (BEGGARS EXIT LEFT AFTER HUMMEL. HOUSE-MAID EXITS OUT KITCHEN. LIGHTS FADE DOWN ON FORESTAGE.)

SCENE II

(COLONEL SITS AND FREEZES IN HIS ROOM. THE YOUNG LADY SITS AND FREEZES READING IN THE HYACINTH ROOM. FIANCEE SITS AND FREEZES IN HER ROOM.)

(LIGHTS UP IN GHOST SUPPER ROOM. THE COLONEL'S VALET, BENGTSSON, ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN, ACCOMPANIED BY JOHANSSON. THEY GO UP INTO THE GHOST SUPPER ROOM, MIME SETTING THE TABLE.)

BENGTSSON

(CONDESCENDINGLY.) Now, Johansson, you'll have to wait on the table while I take care of the coats. Have you done this before?

JOHANSSON

During the day I push that war chairot, as you know, (HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING, HE DOESN'T NEED INSTRUCTIONS FROM BENGTSSON.) but in the evenings, I work as a waiter at receptions. It's always been my dream to get into this house. (JOHANSSON CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO STAIRS TO LOOK AT STATUE.) . . . They're peculiar people, aren't they?

BENGTSSON

Well, yes, I think one might say that they're a little strange.

JOHANSSON

Are we going to have a musicale this evening? Or what is the occasion? (CROSSES UP STAIRS.)

BENGTSSON

(BRAGGING.) Just the ordinary ghost supper, as we call it. They drink tea, without saying a word, or else the Colonel talks all by himself. And they champ their biscuits and crackers all at once and all in unison. They sound like a pack of rats in an attic.

JOHANSSON

Why do you call it the ghost supper?

BENGTTSSON

(MATTER-OF-FACTLY.) They all look like ghosts. . . . This has been going on for twenty years--always the same people, always saying the same things. Or else keeping silent to avoid being embarrassed.

JOHANSSON

(CROSSES RIGHT INTO GHOST SUPPER ROOM. WITH CONTEMPT.) Where's the lady of the house? Isn't she around?

BENGTTSSON

Oh, yes. But she's crazy. (LEADS JOHANSSON TO HALLWAY AND MUMMY.) She keeps herself shut up in a closet because her eyes can't stand the light. She's sitting in there right now. (HE POINTS TO CLOSET IN THE ROUND ROOM.)

JOHANSSON

(INDICATING CLOSET.) In there? (HE AND BENGTTSSON CROSS TO STEPS RIGHT.)

BENGTTSSON

I told you they were a little peculiar.

JOHANSSON

What on earth does she look like?

BENGTTSSON

Like a mummy. Do you want to see her? (HE OPENS THE DOOR.) There she sits. (FIGURE 4) (MUSIC FOR THE MUMMY BEGINS ON THE OPENING OF THE DOOR.)

JOHANSSON

(TURNS AWAY FROM DOOR.) Je-sus!

THE MUMMY

(PUTTING HER HANDS IN FRONT OF HER FACE TO SHIELD HER FROM THE LIGHT. HER MOVEMENTS ARE QUICK AND JERKY LIKE A PARROT. SHRILL AND PARROT-LIKE, IRRITATED.) Why do you open the door. Didn't I tell you to keep it closed?

BENGTTSSON

(SQUATS DOWN TO BE LEVEL WITH MUMMY, EXTENDS HAND AS IF HE HAD SOMETHING IN IT--TEASING HER.) Ta, ta, ta, ta, ta!--Is little chickadee going to

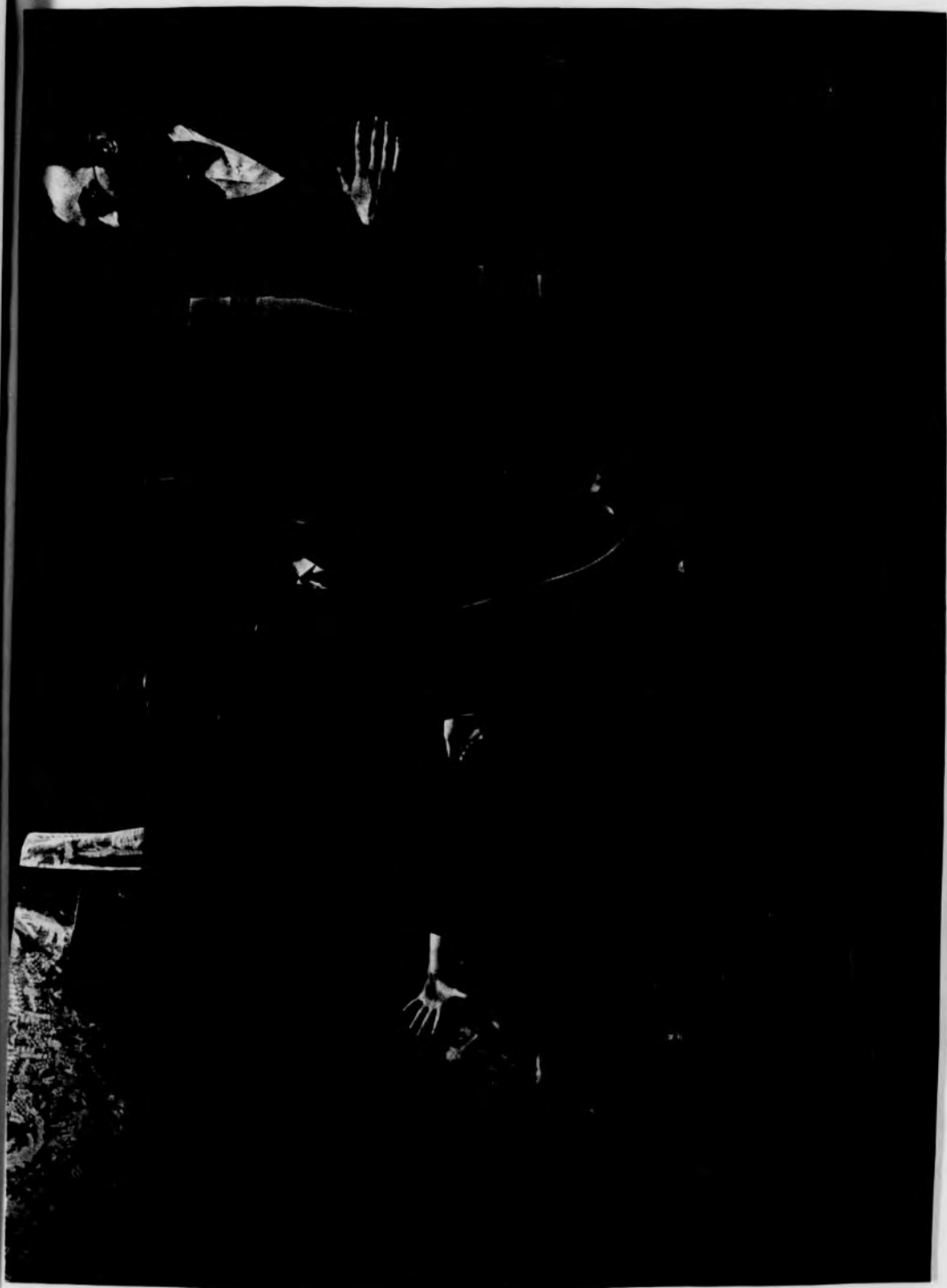


Figure 4

be nice to me? Then little chickadee will get something good! --Pretty polly!

THE MUMMY

(SHRILL LIKE A PARROT.) Pretty polly! Are you there, Jacob? Jacob? Cluck, cluck!

BENGTTSSON

She thinks she's a parrot--and maybe she is. (TO THE MUMMY.) Come on, polly, whistle for us! (THE MUMMY WHISTLES UNTIL BENGTTSSON STOPS HER.)

JOHANSSON

(DISGUSTED.) I thought I had seen everything, but this tops it all.

BENGTTSSON

(STANDS.) Well, when a house grows old, (MATTER-OF-FACTLY.) it turns moldy and rotten, and when people are together too much and torment each other too long, they go crazy. Take the lady in this house--shut up, polly! (MUMMY STOPS WHISTLING FOR A SECOND, THEN BEGINS AGAIN.)--this mummy has been sitting here for forty years--the same husband, same furniture, same relatives, same friends. . . . (INTIMATELY.) And imagine what's gone on in this house! Even I don't know the whole story. . . . Look at this statue. That's the lady of the house as a young girl.!

JOHANSSON

(HE CAN'T IMAGINE THE MUMMY AS BEING THAT BEAUTIFUL.) Oh my god! --Is that the mummy?

BENGTTSSON

(SITS IN CHAIR BY MUMMY CLOSET.) Yes. It's enough to make one cry! But this lady--carried away by her imagination or something--has acquired certain of the peculiarities of the prating parrot. She can't stand cripples, for instance--or sick people. (RISES, CROSSES RIGHT TO BOTTOM OF STEPS.) She can't even stand the sight of her own daughter because she's sick.

JOHANSSON

Is that young girl sick? (CROSSES DOWN STEPS.)

BENGTTSSON

Yes. Didn't you know?

JOHANSSON

No. . . . What about the Colonel? Who is he?

BENGTTSSON

(CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE NOSY JOHANSSON.) Wait a while and you'll see!

JOHANSSON

(LOOKING AT THE STATUE; DISGUSTED BY THE SIGHT OF THE MUMMY.) It's terrifying to realize that-- How old is the lady now?

BENGTTSSON

Who knows? (SECRETIVELY TO JOHANSSON.) But I've heard it said that when she was thirty-five she looked like she was nineteen. (HE CROSSES LEFT TO STAIRS, TAKE JOHANSSON'S ARM, CROSSES BACK INTO ROOM.) And she convinced the Colonel that she was. . . . (THEY CROSS TO DEATH SCREEN.) Do you know what that black Japanese screen is for? (FORBODINGLY.) It's called a death screen, and when somebody's going to die, it's placed around them, (JOHANSSON CROSSES WITH BENGTTSSON TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM.) same as in a hospital.

JOHANSSON

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT OF TABLE.) What a horrible house. . . . (CYNICAL.) That poor student thought that when he entered this house he would be entering paradise.

BENGTTSSON

Which student? Oh, yes, of course! The one that's coming here tonight. The Colonel and his daughter met him at the opera and were captivated by him. . . . Hm. . . . (BENGTTSSON SITS IN CHAIR FAR LEFT, GESTURES TO JOHANSSON TO SIT; MIMES EATING BISCUIT.) But let me ask you a couple of questions. Who's your master? The Financier in the wheelchair?

JOHANSSON

(SITTING IN CHAIR IN FRONT OF TABLE.) Yes, that's right. --Is he coming here too?

BENGTTSSON

He's not invited.

JOHANSSON

(BRAGGING.) Then he'll come uninvited--if necessary! (HUMMEL ENTERS LEFT INTO KITCHEN. HE MOVES SILENTLY FORWARD ON HIS CRUTCHES, LIKE A

BLACK SPIDER, AND EAVESDROPS ON THE SERVANTS, THEN STARTS UP STEPS TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM. MUSIC OF SPIDER THEME BEGINS AS HUMMEL ENTERS HOUSE. BEGGARS ENTER WITH HUMMEL, STAY ON LIFT DOWN LEFT, CROUCHED.) (FIGURE 5)

BENGTTSSON

I'll bet he's a real old mean one.

JOHANSSON

A perfect specimen!

BENGTTSSON

He looks like the devil incarnate!

JOHANSSON

(RISES, CROSSES IN BACK OF TABLE. EXCITED ABOUT THE CHANCE TO TELL ABOUT HUMMEL.) And he's a black magician, I tell you. He can go through locked doors--

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES INTO GHOST SUPPER ROOM. BENGTTSSON JUMPS UP.) Fool! Hold your tongue! (TO BENGTTSSON. GIVES BENGTTSSON MIMED LETTER.) Announce me to the Colonel!

BENGTTSSON

(TAKING THE MIMED LETTER.) But we're expecting company here.

THE OLD MAN

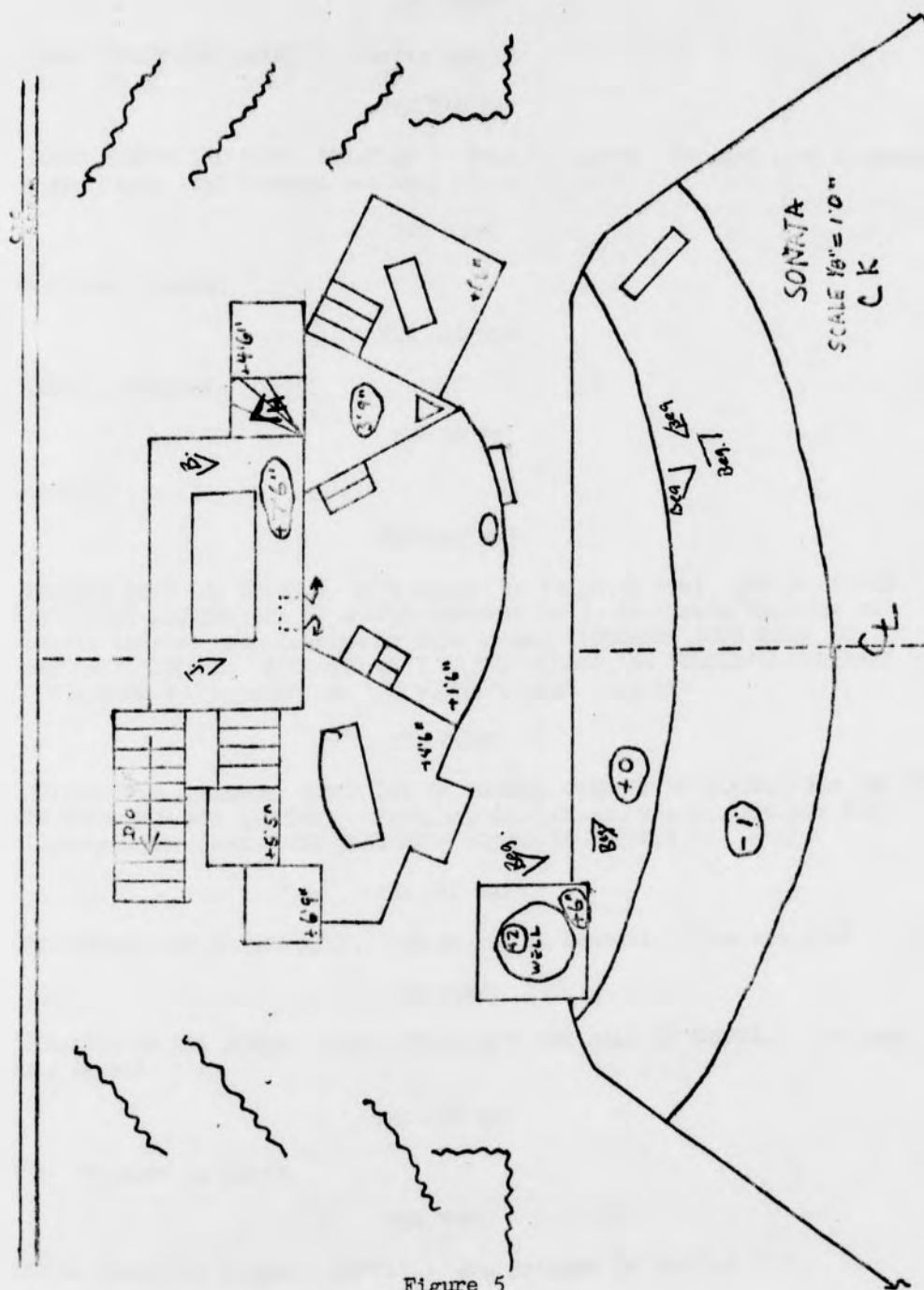
I know you are! My visit is not unexpected-- although undesired.

BENGTTSSON

(CROSSES DOWN STEPS, STOPS AND TURNS.) I see. What was the name?
(PAUSE AND JUST AS HUMMEL IS ABOUT TO ANSWER.) Mr. Hummel?

THE OLD MAN

That's right! (WITH HATRED.) Precisely! (BENGTTSSON GOES INTO KITCHEN, READS MIMED LETTER, GOES TO COLONEL'S ROOM, GIVES HIM THE LETTER AND CROSSES BACK INTO THE KITCHEN. TO JOHANSSON.) Disappear! (JOHANSSON PICKS UP BISCUIT, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT OF TABLE, UNHEEDINGLY. YELLING.) Vanish! (JOHANSSON CROSSES SLOWLY DOWN STAIRS, TURNS TO LOOK AT HUMMEL, EXITS INTO KITCHEN. HUMMEL INSPECTS THE ROOM. STOPS IN FRONT OF THE STATUE. MUCH AMAZED.) Amelia! . . . It is she! . . . Amelia! (MUMMY THEME MUSIC BEGINS. THE STATUE PROTECTS HERSELF FROM HUMMEL.)



THE MUMMY

(FROM WITHIN THE CLOSET.) Pretty polly!

THE OLD MAN

(LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM, STARTLED.) What on earth! Sounded like a parrot in the room. But I don't see any.

THE MUMMY

You there, Jacob?

THE OLD MAN

Place is haunted.

THE MUMMY

Jacob!

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES DOWN TWO STEPS.) It's enough to frighten one! (AS IF HE HAS DISCOVERED ANOTHER BIT OF USEFUL INFORMATION.) So that's the kind of secrets they've been keeping in this house! (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO IMAGINARY PICTURE. WITH HIS BACK TO THE CLOSET, HE STUDIES A PORTRAIT ON THE WALL.) There he is! --The old Colonel himself!

THE MUMMY

(MOVING LIKE A PARROT, COMES OUT OF CLOSET, GOES UP TO HUMMEL FROM BEHIND AND GIVES HIS WIG A PULL.) Cluck, cluck. Cluck, cluck. Are you dumb cluck--cluck. (SHE TURNS AWAY FROM HUMMEL TO RIGHT.)

THE OLD MAN

(FRIGHTENED OUT OF HIS SKIN.) Oh my god in heaven! --Who are you?

THE MUMMY

(SPEAKING IN HER NORMAL VOICE, STILL WITH HER BACK TO HUMMEL.) Is that you, Jacob?

THE OLD MAN

Yes. My name is Jacob.

THE MUMMY

(TURNS SLOWLY TO HUMMEL. SOFTLY.) And my name is Amelia!

THE OLD MAN

(BACKS INTO STEPS AT LEFT. SO FRIGHTENED HE CAN BARELY SPEAK.) Oh no.
 . . . No, no. . . . Oh my god! . . .

THE MUMMY

Yes, this is how I look! (INDICATING THE STATUE.) And that's how I
 did look once upon a time. Life gives one a great education. (TOUCHES
 STATUE.) Most of my life I've spent in the closet, so that I won't have
 to see--or be seen. . . . (MUMMY CROSSES UP STEPS AT LEFT, TURNS TO
 HUMMEL.) But you, Jacob, what are you looking for here?

THE OLD MAN

(RECOVERING.) My child! (REMINDING HER OF THEIR "CRIME.") Our child!

THE MUMMY

She's sitting in there.

THE OLD MAN

Where?

THE MUMMY

(INDICATING THE HYACINTH ROOM AT THE RIGHT.) In there, in the hyacinth
 room.

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES RIGHT TO HYACINTH ROOM STEPS. LOOKING AT THE YOUNG LADY.) Yes,
 there she is! (PAUSE.) And what does her father think of her--(AGAIN
 REMINDING HER HE KNOWS SOMETHING HE CAN USE AGAINST HER.) I mean, the
 Colonel--your husband?

THE MUMMY

I had a quarrel with him once, and told him everything. . . .

THE OLD MAN

And? . . .

THE MUMMY

He didn't believe me. He said, "That's what all women say when they
 want to murder their husbands." (CROSSES DOWN STEPS AND DOWN RIGHT,
 FACES HYACINTH ROOM; HUMMEL COUNTERS LEFT.) . . . All the same it was
 a terrible crime. (WITH PITY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR HER HUSBAND, THE

34

(COLONEL.) His whole life has been falsified, including his family tree. When I look at his family record in the peerage, I say to myself she's no better than a runaway servant girl with a false birth certificate, and girls like that are sent to the reformatory.

THE OLD MAN

A lot of people forge their birth certificates. (CRIMING TO STRIP HER OF HER DIGNITY.) I seem to remember that even you falsified the date of your birth.

THE MUMMY

(TURNS ON HUMMEL.) It was my mother who put me up to it. I'm not to blame for that! . . . And furthermore, you played the biggest part in our crime.

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES RIGHT TO MUMMY AND DRIVES HER BACK TO THE STAIRS RIGHT.) Not true! Your husband started it all when he stole my fiancée from me! I was born unable to forgive until I have punished. I've always looked upon it as an imperative duty. And I still do!

THE MUMMY

(CROSSES UP ONE STEP AS IF PROTECTING HER DAUGHTER FROM HAVEL.) What do you expect to find in this house? What do you want here? And how did you get in? --Does your business concern my daughter? Keep your hands off her, I warn you, or you'll die!

THE OLD MAN

(TURNS LEFT FROM MUMMY. CALMLY.) I wish her nothing but the best!

THE MUMMY

And you must have consideration for her father, too!

THE OLD MAN

(TURNS BACK LEFT TO MUMMY. ADAMANTLY.) Never!

THE MUMMY

(FOREWARNING HIM THAT HE IS NOT ON HIS OWN GROUNDS ANY MORE.) Then you must die. In this room. Behind that screen.

THE OLD MAN

(UNHEEDINGLY.) Be that as it may. But I'm a bulldog. I never let go.

THE MUMMY

You want to marry her to that student. Why? He has nothing; he is nothing.

THE OLD MAN

He'll be a rich man, thanks to me.

THE MUMMY

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT OF HUMMEL TO STEPS. BECOMING THE HOSTESS.) Are you one of the invited guests tonight?

THE OLD MAN

(COUNTERS RIGHT. JOKINGLY.) No, but I've decided to invite myself to this ghost supper!

THE MUMMY

(CROSSES UP LEFT STAIRS.) Do you know who'll be here?

THE OLD MAN

Not entirely.

THE MUMMY

The Baron--who lives upstairs, and whose father-in-law was buried this afternoon--

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT. MAKING LIGHT OF THE COMPLICATED SITUATION.) Yes, the Baron--who is getting a divorce in order to marry the daughter of the Superintendent's wife. The Baron--who was once--(AN OPEN AFFRONT TO THE MUMMY.) your lover!

THE MUMMY

And then there'll be your former fiancee--whom my husband seduced. . . .

THE OLD MAN

(CHUCKLING.) A very select gathering . . .

THE MUMMY

(TURNS TO STATUE, MOMENTARILY BROKEN.) Oh god, why can't we die? If only we could die!

THE OLD MAN

(CONFRONTING HER.) Then why do you keep seeing each other?

THE MUMMY

Our crimes and our secrets and our guilt bind us together! We have split up and gone our separate ways an infinite number of times. But we're drawn back together again. . . . (COLONEL RISES IN HIS ROOM.)

THE OLD MAN

I believe the Colonel is coming.

THE MUMMY

Then I'll go in to Adele. . . . (CROSSES RIGHT TO HYACINTH ROOM, STOPS, TURNS BACK TO HUMMEL. PAUSE.) Jacob, don't do anything foolish! Be considerate toward him. . . . (HUMMEL CROSSES UP LEFT. A PAUSE. SHE LEAVES.)

THE COLONEL

(ENTERS FROM HIS ROOM AT LEFT. COLD AND RESERVED.) Please sit down. (HUMMEL TAKES HIS TIME SEATING HIMSELF UP LEFT. A PAUSE. COLONEL CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AND STARES AT HIM.) Did you write this letter? (HE PULLS OUT MIMED LETTER.)

THE OLD MAN

I did.

THE COLONEL

And your name is Hummel?

THE OLD MAN

It is. (PAUSE.)

THE COLONEL

(RESIGNED.) Since it's clear that you have bought up all my outstanding promissory notes, it follows that I'm completely at your mercy. (TURNS TO HUMMEL, THEN THROWS MIMED LETTER ON TABLE DOWN LEFT.) Now what do you want?

THE OLD MAN

I want to be paid--in one way or another.

THE COLONEL

In what way?

THE OLD MAN

A very simple way. (UNCTUOUS.) Don't let's talk about money. Allow me to come and go in your house--as a guest.

THE COLONEL

(CROSSES LEFT HALFWAY TO HUMMEL. RELIEVED.) If that's all it takes to satisfy you--

THE OLD MAN

Thank you!

THE COLONEL

(SUSPICIOUS.) And what else?

THE OLD MAN

(DEMANDING.) Dismiss Bengtsson!

THE COLONEL

Why? Bengtsson is my devoted servant. He's been with me during my whole career. The army awarded him a medal for faithful service. Why should I dismiss him?

THE OLD MAN

(RISES.) I have no doubt he's a very fine man in your eyes. But he's not the man he seems to be!

THE COLONEL

(CHALLENGING HIM.) Who is?

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO COLONEL. TAKEN ABACK.) True! --But Bengtsson must go!

THE COLONEL

(ANGRY.) Are you going to give orders in my house?

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT.) Yes! Since I own everything that you can lay your eyes on--furniture, curtains, dinner service, linen . . . (FACES OUT.) and other things. . . .

THE COLONEL

What other things?

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES UP RIGHT. INDICATING EVERYTHING AROUND HIM.) Everything. I own it all. Everything that you see here is mine!

THE COLONEL

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT OF HUMMEL, STOPS IN FRONT OF STAIRS.) I can't argue with that. But my family honor, my coat of arms and my good name are things you cannot take away from me!

THE OLD MAN

(STRIPPING AWAY HIS FACADE.) Yes, I can. They don't belong to you. (PAUSE.) You are not a nobleman. (CROSSES DOWN TO COLONEL'S PLANE.)

THE COLONEL

(TURNS TOWARD HUMMEL.) I shall give you the opportunity of withdrawing those words! (VERY HONORABLE AND CONTAINED, BUT ANGRY.)

THE OLD MAN

(PRODUCING A MIMED PIECE OF PAPER FROM HIS COAT POCKET. ENJOYING THIS IMMENSELY.) If you will take the trouble to read this extract from the standard book of genealogy. (COLONEL CROSSES TO GET PAPER AND RETURNS DOWN LEFT.) You will see that the family whose name you have assumed has been extinct for over a century.

THE COLONEL

(READING.) Of course I've heard rumors like this before. But it was my father's name before it was mine. . . . (READING ON. DEFEATED.) I can't deny it. You are quite right. . . . I am not a nobleman! Not even that. . . . Therefore I shall take this signet ring from off my hand-- (TAKES OFF MIMED RING.) Oh, but of course, excuse me: it belongs to you. There you are. (GIVES MIMED RING TO HUMMEL.)

THE OLD MAN

(PUTTING THE RING IN HIS POCKET. CASUALLY.) Let us continue. (PAUSE. CROSSES UP LEFT.) --You are not a colonel either!

THE COLONEL

(SINKS ON PLATFORM, TOTALLY DEFLATED AND STRIPPED.) Am I not?

THE OLD MAN

(AS IF READING A CITATION.) No! You held a temporary commission as a colonel in the American Volunteers; but at the end of the Spanish-American War and the reorganization of the Army, all such titles were abolished.

THE COLONEL

(TWISTING HIS FISTS TOGETHER, HEAD DOWN.) Is that true?

THE OLD MAN

(REACHING INTO HIS POCKET.) Do you want to see for yourself?

THE COLONEL

No, it won't be necessary. . . . (ANGRY.) Who are you? What gives you the right to stand there and strip me naked this way?

THE OLD MAN

(GESTURES WITH CRUTCH FOR COLONEL TO RELAX.) Patience, my good man! (PAUSE.) And as far as stripping is concerned--do you really want to know who you are?

THE COLONEL

(RISES, ANGRY.) Have you no decency? (SITS BACK DOWN UNABLE TO DEFEND HIMSELF.)

THE OLD MAN

(CIRCLES ROOM DURING SPEECH.) Take off that wig of yours and have a look at yourself in the mirror. And while you're at it, take out those false teeth and shave off that moustache and let Bengtsson unlace your mental corset, and then we shall see if a certain valet, Mr. X, won't recognize himself--(CROSSES LEFT TO COLONEL, FACING HIM, DEGRADING HIM.) a valet in a certain house who flirted with the maids in order to scrounge in the kitchen. (LIGHTS FADE. COLONEL CROSSES RIGHT TO TABLE, REACHES FOR THE MIMED BELL ON THE TABLE. HUMMEL STOPS HIM WITH HIS CRUTCH, SAYING:) I wouldn't touch that if I were you. If you call Bengtsson I'll order him arrested. . . . (CROSSES UP TO STAIRS TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM CALMLY. SOOTHING THE COLONEL.) I believe your guests are arriving. (STUDENT ENTERS FROM LEFT.) Now let us be calm, and go on playing our old roles for a while longer. (LIGHTS FADE INTO GHOST SUPPER ROOM.)

THE COLONEL

(CROSSES UP TO HUMMEL.) Who are you? (ANGRY AND SUSPICIOUS.) I've seen your eyes and heard your voice before.

THE OLD MAN

(TURNS TO COLONEL.) Never mind that. Be silent and do as you're told!

THE STUDENT

(COLONEL CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO DOOR, OPENS IT. STUDENT ENTERS AND BOWS TO THE COLONEL.) How do you do, sir!

THE COLONEL

(CONTROLLED AND POLITE.) Welcome to my house, young man! Your heroism at that terrible accident has brought your name to everybody's lips. I deem it an honor to receive you in my house.

THE STUDENT

(NERVOUS BECAUSE HE HAS NEVER BEEN IN THIS TYPE OF HOUSE.) You're very kind, sir. It's a great honor for me, sir. I've never expected--well, my humble birth--and your illustrious name and your noble birth. . . . (CROSSES UP LEFT STEPS AND BOWS TO HUMMEL, WHO NODS.)

THE COLONEL

Mr. Hummel, may I introduce Mr. Arkenholz, who is a student at the university. The ladies are in there, Mr. Arkenholz--if you care to join them. I have a few more things I wanted to say to Mr. Hummel. (STUDENT CROSSES TO HYACINTH ROOM. THE MUMMY CROSSES TO STEPS TO MEET HIM. THEY CROSS TO THE YOUNG LADY. THE STUDENT GREETES THE YOUNG LADY THEN SITS ON SOFA WITH HER. THE MUMMY CROSSES IN BACK OF SOFA AND FREEZES IN CONVERSATION. HUMMEL AND COLONEL CROSS INTO GHOST SUPPER ROOM. COLONEL GESTURES FOR HUMMEL TO SIT.) An excellent young man--musical, sings, writes poetry. . . . If it weren't for his birth and social position I certainly wouldn't have anything against--my. . . . (FIANCEE RISES AND STARTS CROSS TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM. BARON AND LADY IN BLACK ENTER LEFT AND CROSS TO FRONT DOOR.)

THE OLD MAN

Against what?

THE COLONEL

Having my daughter--

THE OLD MAN

(SITS CENTER IN BACK OF TABLE.) Your daughter! . . . Apropos of her, why does she always sit in that room? (INDICATES HYACINTH ROOM.)

THE COLONEL

She feels she has to sit in the hyacinth room whenever she's in the house. A peculiarity of hers. . . . (NOTICING THE FIANCEE.) Here comes Miss Beatrice von Holsteinkrona. Charming woman. Very active in the church and with an income that perfectly suits her position and circumstances. . . .

THE OLD MAN

(RISES, CROSSES RIGHT TO FIANCEE. TO HIMSELF.) My fiancée! (THE FIANCEE ENTERS, WHITE-HAIRED AND GIVING EVERY APPEARANCE OF BEING CRAZY BY HER PAISIED MOVEMENTS AND HER UNAWARENESS OF THOSE AROUND HER. COLONEL CROSSES RIGHT TO FIANCEE AND STUDENT HELPS FIANCEES INTO CHAIR AT RIGHT.)

THE COLONEL

Miss Holsteinkrona--Mr. Hummel. (HUMMEL KISSES THE FIANCEE'S HAND. BARON SKANSKORG ENTERS GHOST SUPPER ROOM WITH LADY IN BLACK. COLONEL CROSSES TO BARON AND LADY IN BLACK AND BOWS.) Baron Skanskorg-- (BARON NODS. LADY IN BLACK IS SEATED IN CHAIR AT FAR LEFT, BARON STANDS TO RIGHT OF HER CHAIR.)

THE OLD MAN

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT. IN AN ASIDE, BITTERLY.) A jewel thief, if ever I saw one. (COLONEL KISSES LADY IN BLACK'S HAND. HUMMEL TO THE COLONEL, CYNICALLY.) Now let the mummy in and the party can begin.

THE COLONEL

(CROSSES DOWN STEPS TO LOWER PLATFORM TO CALL.) Polly!

THE MUMMY

(CROSSES LEFT TO ROUND ROOM AND AS SHE CROSSES SHE BECOMES PARROT-LIKE AGAIN WITH JERKING MOVEMENTS.) Cluck, cluck! Dumb-cluck!

THE COLONEL

(TO HUMMEL.) Shall we invite the young people, too?

THE OLD MAN

(COLONEL AND MUMMY CROSS TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM. COLONEL AT TOP OF STEPS LEFT. MUMMY CROSSES TO COUCH IN BACK OF TABLE.) No! Not the young

people! They shall be spared. (STUDENT CROSSES TO HASSECK, SITS AND FREEZES. SILENCE. GHOST SUPPER MUSIC BEGINS. AS THE MUSIC BEGINS, THE PARROT-LIKE MUMMY MIMES PASSING A PLATE OF BISCUITS TO ALL OF THE GUESTS. MUMMY THEN SITS IN CHAIR AT CENTER IN BACK OF TABLE. THE ENTIRE GHOST SUPPER PARTY MIMES EATING THEIR BISCUITS IN UNISON. AFTER THEY TAKE A BITE, THEY ALL LOOK AROUND AT EACH OTHER WITH STONE FACES. IT IS AS IF THEY ARE EACH IN THEIR OWN VACUUM. THEY ARE DYING PARTS OF AN OUT-DATED MACHINE. THE UNISON-EATING IS DONE THREE TIMES AT THIS POINT. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE BEGGARS BEGIN TO MOVE UP TOWARD THE HOUSE. IT IS VERY SLOW AND UNDISTRACTING. THEY ARE HUNGRY FOR THE FOOD AT THE GHOST SUPPER, BUT SYMBOLICLY, THEY ARE THE NEW, VITAL MACHINE THAT IS TAKING OVER THE DEAD, OUT-DATED ONE--THE UPPER CLASS.) (FIGURE 6)

THE COLONEL

(CROSSES TO LEFT OF MUMMY.) Shall I ring for the tea?

THE OLD MAN

(PULLS OUT CHAIR DOWN CENTER IN FRONT OF TABLE.) Why bother? No one cares for tea. (SITS.) Why play games. (PAUSE. UNISON EATING AND LOOKING AROUND TWO TIMES.)

THE COLONEL

(CROSSES LEFT OF MUMMY.) Then perhaps we should start a conversation? (MUSIC STOPS.)

THE OLD MAN

(SLOWLY, DELIBERATELY AND WITH FREQUENT PAUSES.) About the weather? (OUT TO AUDIENCE INCLUDING THEM IN HIS SCATHING SPEECH WHICH FOLLOWS.) Which we know. Ask each other how we're feeling? Which we also know. I prefer silence . . . (THREATENINGLY.) in which one can hear thoughts and see the past. (TURNS INTO TO GHOST SUPPER GROUP. OTHERS BEGIN TO BECOME AWARE THAT HE IS ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING THEY DON'T WANT TO HEAR. THEY ARE ALL TENSE AND TRY TO PRETEND THEY AREN'T LISTENING.) Silence cannot hide anything--which is more than you can say for words. (AS IF GIVING A LECTURE.) I read the other day that the differences in languages originated among the primitive savages who sought to keep their secrets from other tribes. Languages are therefore codes, and he who finds the key can understand all the languages of the world. But that doesn't mean that secrets cannot be discovered without a key. Especially in those cases where a paternity must be proved. (DIRECTS THIS TO THE COLONEL WHO FIDGITS AT THE POSSIBILITY OF PUBLIC EXPOSURE.) Legal proof is of course a different matter. Two false witnesses provide complete proof of whatever they agree to say. But the kind of escapades I have in mind (DIRECTS THIS AT THE BARON AND THE LADY IN BLACK WHO ARE TRYING TO HIDE THEIR LOVE AFFAIR. SHE LOWERS HER EYES AND THE BARON GLARES AT HUMMEL.) one doesn't take witnesses along. Nature herself has planted in man a blushing sense of shame, which

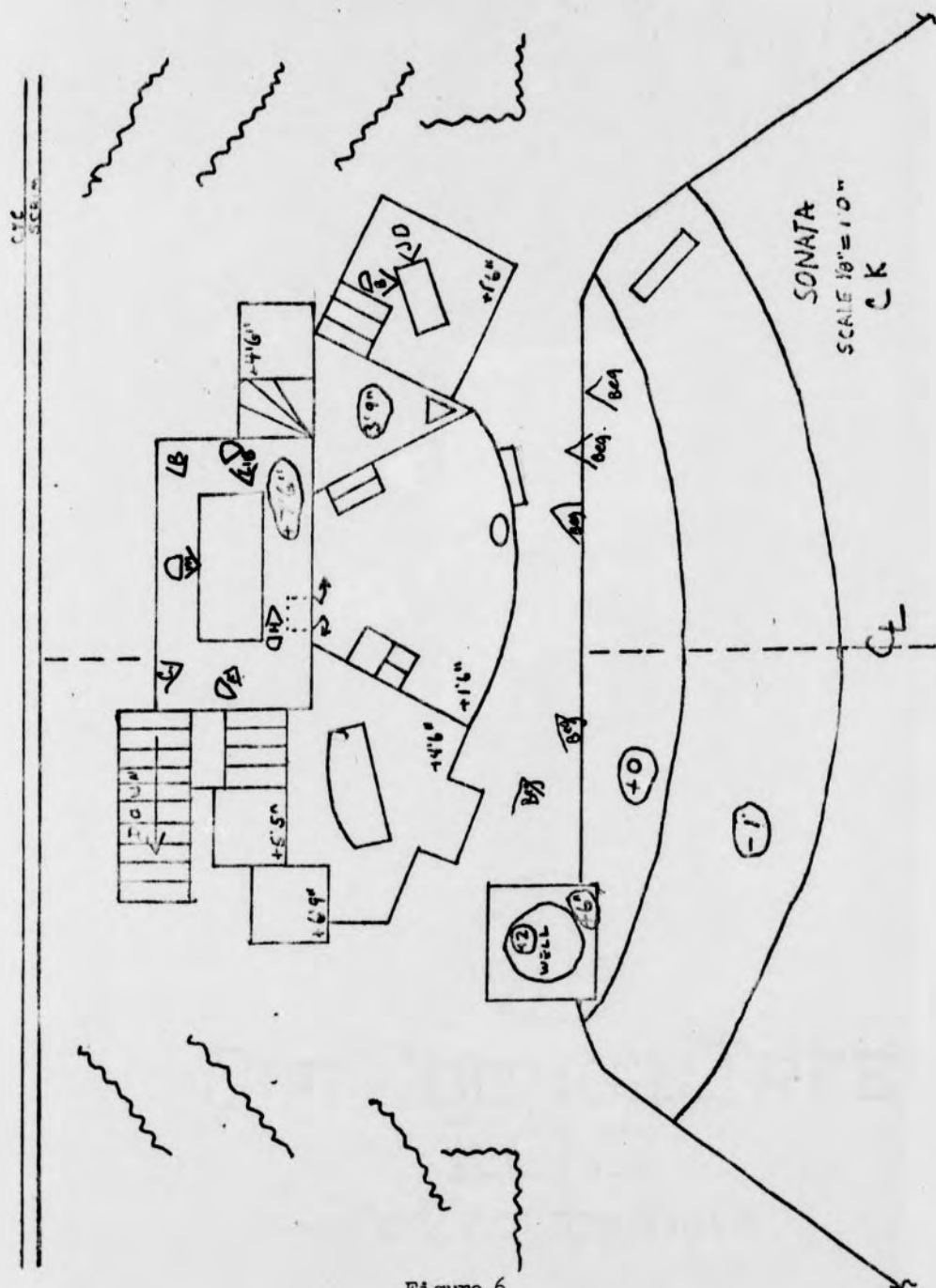


Figure 6



Figure 7

seeks to hide what should be hidden. But we slip into certain situations without intending to, and chance confronts us with moments of revelation, when the deepest secrets are revealed, the mask is ripped from the imposter and the villain stands exposed. . . . (HE STANDS. PAUSE. ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER IN SILENCE AND EAT IN UNISON. HUMMEL CROSSES TO FAR LEFT OF ROOM AND TURNS TO THEM. VERY CALM.) Extraordinary, how silent you all are! (LONG SILENCE.) Take this house, for example. In this estimable house, in this elegant home, (LOOKS DIRECTLY AT MUMMY.) where beauty, wealth, and culture are united . . . (LONG SILENCE. ALL LOOK AROUND.) All of us sitting here, we know who we are, don't we? . . . I don't have to tell you. . . . And you know me although you pretend ignorance. . . . Sitting in that room is my daughter, yes mine, you know that too. . . . (COLONEL REACTS AT THIS EXPOSURE BY TURNING RIGHT SO HIS BACK IS TO THEM ALL. THE FOLLOWING IS LIKE A SERMON JUSTIFYING HIS PRESENCE AT THE GHOST SUPPER. IT IS HONEST, OPEN, AND INTENSE AND BUILDS INTO ANGER AT THEM FOR LIVING SUCH FALSE LIVES.) She had lost all desire to live, without knowing why. . . . She was withering away because of the air in this house, which reeks of crime, deception, and deceptions of every kind. . . . That is why I had to find a friend for her, a friend from whose very presence she would apprehend the warmth and light radiated by a noble deed. . . . That was my mission in this house. To pull up the weeds, to expose the crimes, to settle the accounts, so that these young people might make a new beginning in this home, which is my gift to them! (LONG SILENCE. INDICATES IMAGINARY CLOCK ON WALL IN BACK OF MUMMY.) Listen to the ticking of the clock, like a deathwatch beetle in the wall! Listen to what it's saying! (SWINGING HIS CRUTCH LIKE A PENDULUM.) "time's-up, time's-up! . . ." When it strikes--in just a few moments--your time is up. Then you may go--not before. But the clock raises its arm before it strikes. (RAISES HIS CRUTCH.) --Listen! It's warning you! "Clocks can strike!" --And I can strike too! (HE STRIKES THE TABLE VIOLENTLY WITH HIS RIGHT CRUTCH.) Do you understand? (MUSIC, CLOCK TICKING.) (SILENCE. ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER, THEY ARE EMBARRASSED AT HIS DECORUM, BUT UNMOVED.)

THE MUMMY

(AS A NORMAL PERSON, ELEGANT AND SELF-CONTAINED, RISES AND MIMES STOPPING THE PENDULUM OF THE CLOCK IN BACK OF HER. CLOCK MUSIC STOPS.) But I can stop time in its course. I can wipe out the past, and undo what is done. (STARTS RIGHT AROUND TABLE.) Not with bribes, not with threats --but through suffering and repentance. (SOFTLY, AS SHE TOUCHES FIANCEE'S SHOULDERS.) We are poor miserable creatures, we know that. We have erred, (CROSSES AROUND TABLE DOWN RIGHT.) we have transgressed, we, like all the rest. We are not what we seem to be. At bottom we are better than ourselves, since we abhor and detest our misdeeds. But when you, Jacob Hummel, with your false name, come here to sit in judgment over us, that proves that you are more contemptible than we! And you are not the one you seem to be. (HUMMEL BREAKS AWAY AND CROSSES DOWN STEPS INTO ROUND ROOM, FRIGHTENED.) You are a slave trader, a stealer of souls. You once stole me with false promises. You murdered the Consul who was buried today, you strangled him with debts. (CROSSES DOWN STEPS INTO

ROUND ROOM. SHE BACKS HUMMEL INTO CHAIR UP STAGE BY CLOSET DOOR. HE IS INCAPABLE OF FLEEING HER EXPOSURE OF HIM.) You have stolen the student and shackled him with an imaginary debt of his father's, who never owed you a penny. . . . But there is one dark spot in your life, which I'm not sure about--although I have my suspicions . . . (CROSSES DOWN TO TABLE CENTER.) I think that Bengtsson might help us. (SHE RINGS THE MIMED BELL ON THE TABLE.)

THE OLD MAN

(TRYING TO RECOVER.) No! Not Bengtsson! Not him!

THE MUMMY

Then it is true? He does know! (SHE RINGS AGAIN. BENGTSSON ENTERS FROM KITCHEN, CROSSES TO STATUE ROOM. JOHANSSON CROSSES TO STEPS TO STATUE ROOM. COLONEL CROSSES LEFT TO TOP OF STEPS IN GHOST SUPPER ROOM. THE MILKMAID MUSIC STARTS AND THE MILKMAID FROM RIGHT APPEARS IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE MIMING DROWNING. NO ONE SEES HER EXCEPT HUMMEL. HE RECOILS IN FEAR. SHE EXITS.) Bengtsson, do you know this man?

BENGTSSON

Yes, (CROSSES DOWN INTO ROUND ROOM.) I know him and he knows me. (TRYING TO MAKE A JOKE, BUT NO ONE LAUGHS.) Life has its ups and downs, as we all know, and I have been in his service, and once he was in mine. To be exact, he was a sponger in my kitchen for two whole years. Since he had to be out of the house by three o'clock, dinner had to be ready at two, and those in the house had to eat the warmed-up food left by that ox. Even worse, he drank up the pure soup stock and the gravy, which then had to be diluted with water. He sat there like a vampire, sucking all the marrow out of the house, and turned us all into skeletons. And he nearly succeeded in putting us into prison, when we accused the cook of being a thief. (HE BECOMES MORE INTENSE. THIS IS HIS CHANCE TO GET BACK AT HUMMEL.) Later I met this man in Hamburg under another name. He had become a usurer or bloodsucker. (HUMMEL TRIES TO EXIT OUT THE FRONT DOOR BUT BENGTSSON GRABS HIM AND THROWS HIM BACK IN CHAIR.) And it was there that he was accused of having lured a young girl out onto the ice in order to drown her, for she was the only witness to a crime which he was afraid would come to light. . . .

THE MUMMY

(PASSES HER HAND OVER HUMMEL'S FACE.) That is the real you! Now empty your pockets of the notes and the will! (HUMMEL GIVES MIMED PAPERS TO BENGTSSON. THE MUMMY STROKES HUMMEL'S BACK.) Pretty bird! Where's Jacob!

THE OLD MAN

(VERY PARROT-LIKE AS THE MUMMY WAS, DROPS CRUTCHES. BEGGARS GESTURE TO HUMMEL.) Jacob's here!

THE MUMMY

Can clocks strike?

THE OLD MAN

(MAKING CLUCKING SOUNDS.) Clocks can strike! (HE IMITATES A CUCKOO CLOCK.) Coo-coo! Coo-coo! Coo-coo! . . .

THE MUMMY

(OPENS CLOSET DOOR AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.) Now the clock has struck! Stand up (HUMMEL STANDS) and enter the closet where I have sat for twenty years, crying over our misdeeds. You'll find a rope in there, which can represent the one you strangled the Consul with, and with which you intended to strangle your benefactor . . . (HUMMEL CROSSES TO CLOSET.) Go in! (HUMMEL GOES INTO THE CLOSET. THE MUMMY CROSSES UP CENTER AND CLOSSES THE DOORS. DEATH SCREEN MUSIC STARTS AS BENGTSSON CROSSES TO SCREEN AT FAR RIGHT AND SETS IT UP IN FRONT OF CLOSET.) Bengtsson! Put up the screen! The death screen! It's over! --May god have mercy on his soul!

ALL

Amen! (ALL DROP HEADS AND FREEZE FOR A SECOND, THEN ALL EXIT: COLONEL AND MUMMY CROSS TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM AND SIT AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE TABLE AND FREEZE. LADY IN BLACK AND BARON EXIT LEFT OUT FROM DOOR. FIANCEE EXITS UP RIGHT STEPS. BEGGARS OFF RIGHT. JOHANSSON CROSSES OUT FRONT DOOR. BENGTSSON CROSSES INTO KITCHEN AND SITS. HOUSEMAID AND COOK ENTER FROM BACK KITCHEN DOOR AND SIT AT KITCHEN TABLE WITH BENGTSSON AND ALL OF THEM FREEZE.) (FIGURE 8) (LIGHTS FADE DOWN IN GHOST SUPPER ROOM AND AS POEM MUSIC BEGINS, LIGHTS FADE UP IN HYACINTH ROOM. SLIDE OF BUDDAH WITH HYACINTHS IS PROJECTED ONTO SCREEN IN ROUND ROOM. IN THE HYACINTH ROOM THE YOUNG LADY CAN BE SEEN SITTING ON THE RIGHT OF THE SOFA AT MIMED DULCIMER ON WHICH SHE ACCOMPANIES THE STUDENT. AFTER A PRELUDE PLAYED BY THE YOUNG LADY, THE STUDENT RECITES SITTING ON HASSOCK DOWN LEFT.

THE STUDENT

(RECITES AS A LOVE POEM TO THE YOUNG LADY.)

I saw the sun
And from its blaze
There burst on me
The deepest truth:

Man reaps as he sows;
Blessed is he
Who sows the good.

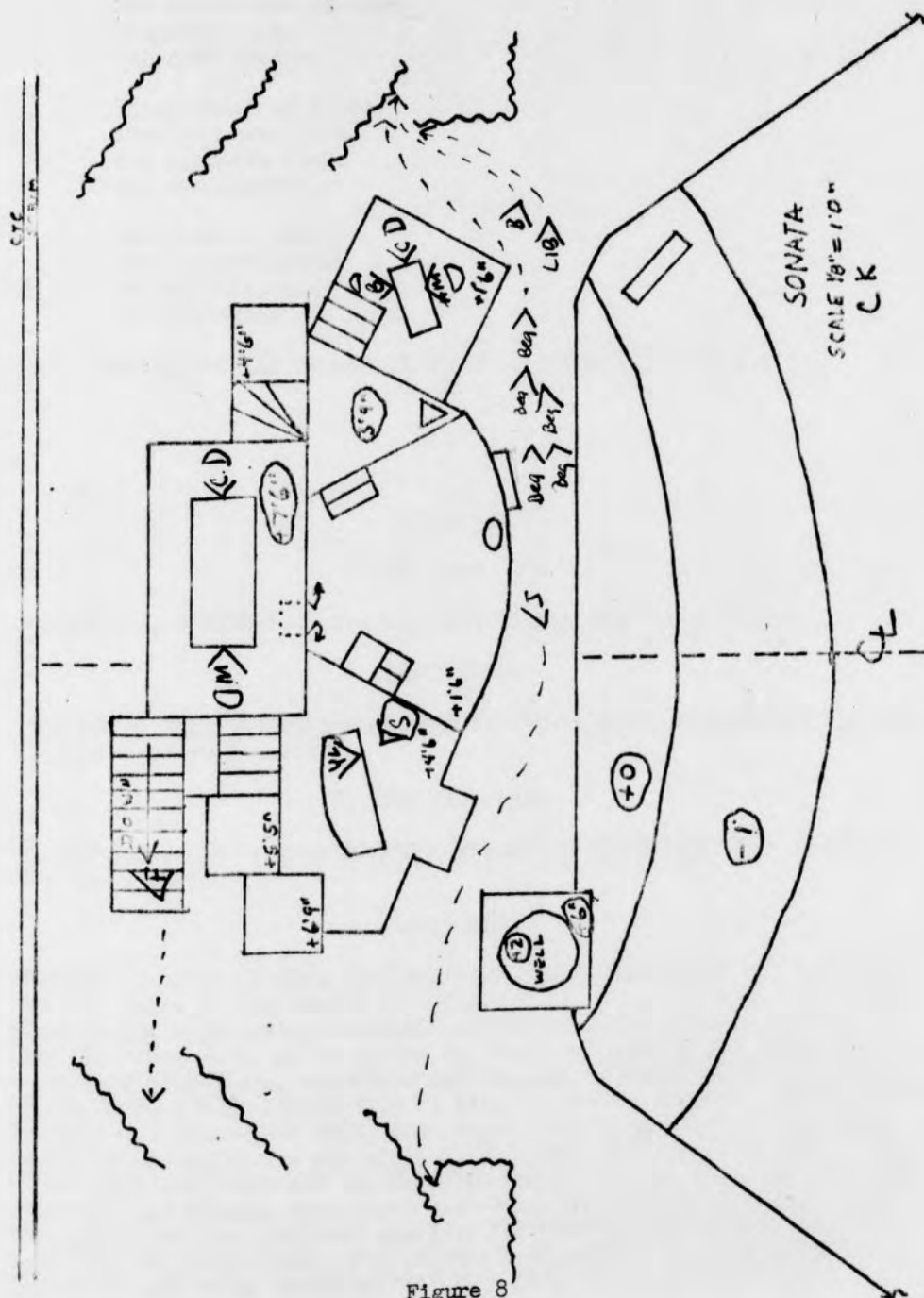


Figure 8

For deeds done in anger
Kindness alone
Can make amends.

Bring cheer to those
Whom you have hurt,
And kindness reaps
Its own rewards.

The pure in heart
Have none to fear.
The harmless are happy.
The guileless are good.

(THE YOUNG LADY GAZES IN JOY AS SCENE III STARTS IMMEDIATELY.)

SCENE III

THE YOUNG LADY

(HAVING FUN, JOKINGLY.) Now you must sing a song to my flowers!

THE STUDENT

(INDICATING THE IMAGINARY HYACINTHS ON THE BALCONY, SERIOUSLY.) Is this the flower of your soul?

THE YOUNG LADY

The one and only! (DOUBTING HIS LOVE, SHE IS THE HYACINTH.) Don't you love the hyacinth?

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES UP, SITS ON SOFA LEFT OF YOUNG LADY. REASSURING HER AND RELATING HER BEAUTY TO THE BEAUTY OF THE FLOWER.) I love it above all other flowers--its stem rising straight and slender, like a young maiden, from the round bulb, which floats on water and reaches its white rare roots down into clear, colorless nothingness. (REFERRING TO THE SHELL OF THE HOUSE SHE IS LIVING IN.) I love it for its colors: the snow-white, innocent and pure--(HER SKIN) the golden yellow, sweet at honey--(THE RIBBON IN HER HAIR) the shy pink, (HER CHEEKS) the ripe red, (HER LIPS) --(HIS EYES MEET HERS AND HE DESCRIBES HER EYES.) but above all the blue ones--blue as morning mist, deep-eyed blue, ever-faithful blue. I love them all--more than gold and pearls. (THE COMPARISON BECOMES TOO INTENSE FOR THE YOUNG LADY. SHE IS AFRAID TO ACCEPT HIS LOVE WITHOUT TESTING SO SHE TURNS SLIGHTLY AWAY FROM HIM. HE TRIES TO BE MORE

INTENSE AND CONVINCING.) Have loved them ever since I was a child, have worshipped them because they possess all the virtues I lack . . . (YOUNG LADY RISES, CROSSES RIGHT. SHE CANNOT RETURN HIS LOVE.) But still--

THE YOUNG LADY

What?

THE STUDENT

(FEELS REJECTED.) My love is not returned. These beautiful blossoms hate and detest me.

THE YOUNG LADY

How?

THE STUDENT

(RISES, CROSSES LEFT IN BACK OF COUCH.) Their fragrance--as strong and clear as the first winds of spring, sweeping down from the fields of melting snow--confuse my senses--they deafen me, blind me, drive me out of my mind--(CROSSES RIGHT TO YOUNG LADY.) impale me with their poisonous arrows that stab my heart and set my head afire! . . . (TOUCHES YOUNG LADY ON SHOULDER.) Don't you know the legend of that flower?

THE YOUNG LADY

(REACTS TO HIS TOUCH, PULLS AWAY AND CROSSES LEFT TO CUSHION, SITS.) No. (VERY COY.) Tell me.

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO BALCONY. HERE HE COMPARES THE FLOWER, THE YOUNG LADY, TO THE EARTH. HE DESCRIBES IT WITH HIS HANDS TOO.) First I must tell you what it means as a symbol. The bulb is the earth, whether floating on water or buried deep in black humus. Here the stalk shoots up, straight as the axis of the world, and here at its upper end are gathered together the six-pointed star flowers.

THE YOUNG LADY

(CAPTIVATED BY HIS CLEVER USE OF WORDS AND SYMBOLS.) Above the earth, the stars! How sublime! How did you know that? Where did you discover that?

THE STUDENT

(TURNS LEFT TO YOUNG LADY.) I don't know. Let me think. (CROSSES LEFT TO HER AND KNEELS.) --In your eyes! . . . So you see, it's an image of the whole cosmos. (HE IS THE BUDDHA WAITING FOR HER TO AROUSE HIM--

SEXUALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.) That's why Buddha sits there with the bulb of the earth in his lap, watching it constantly in order to see it shoot up and burst forth and be transformed into a heaven. This poor earth shall become a heaven! That is what Buddha is waiting for!

THE YOUNG LADY

(EXCITED, ENJOYING THE METAPHORS AND CARRYING THEM FURTHER.) Of course! I see that now! --And don't the snowflakes have six points like the hyacinth?

THE STUDENT

Exactly! Then snowflakes are falling stars--

THE YOUNG LADY

And the snowdrop is a snow-star--growing out of the snow.

THE STUDENT

And Sirius, the largest and most beautiful of all the stars in the firmament, golden-red Sirius is the narcissus with its golden-red chalice and its six white rays--

THE YOUNG LADY

Have you seen the shalot burst into bloom?

THE STUDENT

Yes, of course I have! It hides its blossoms in a ball--a globe just like the celestial globe, strewn with white stars.

THE YOUNG LADY

How heavenly! Wonderful! Whose idea was it?

THE STUDENT

(HE TAKES BOTH HER HANDS AND THEY BEGIN TO GET UP AS THEIR EXCITEMENT RISES. HE IS READY TO TAKE HER IN HIS ARMS.) (FIGURE 9) Yours!

THE YOUNG LADY

Yours!

THE STUDENT

(RISES AND PULLS YOUNG LADY UP WITH HIM.) Ours. We have given birth to something together. (ATTEMPTING TO HOLD HER.) We are wedded. . . .

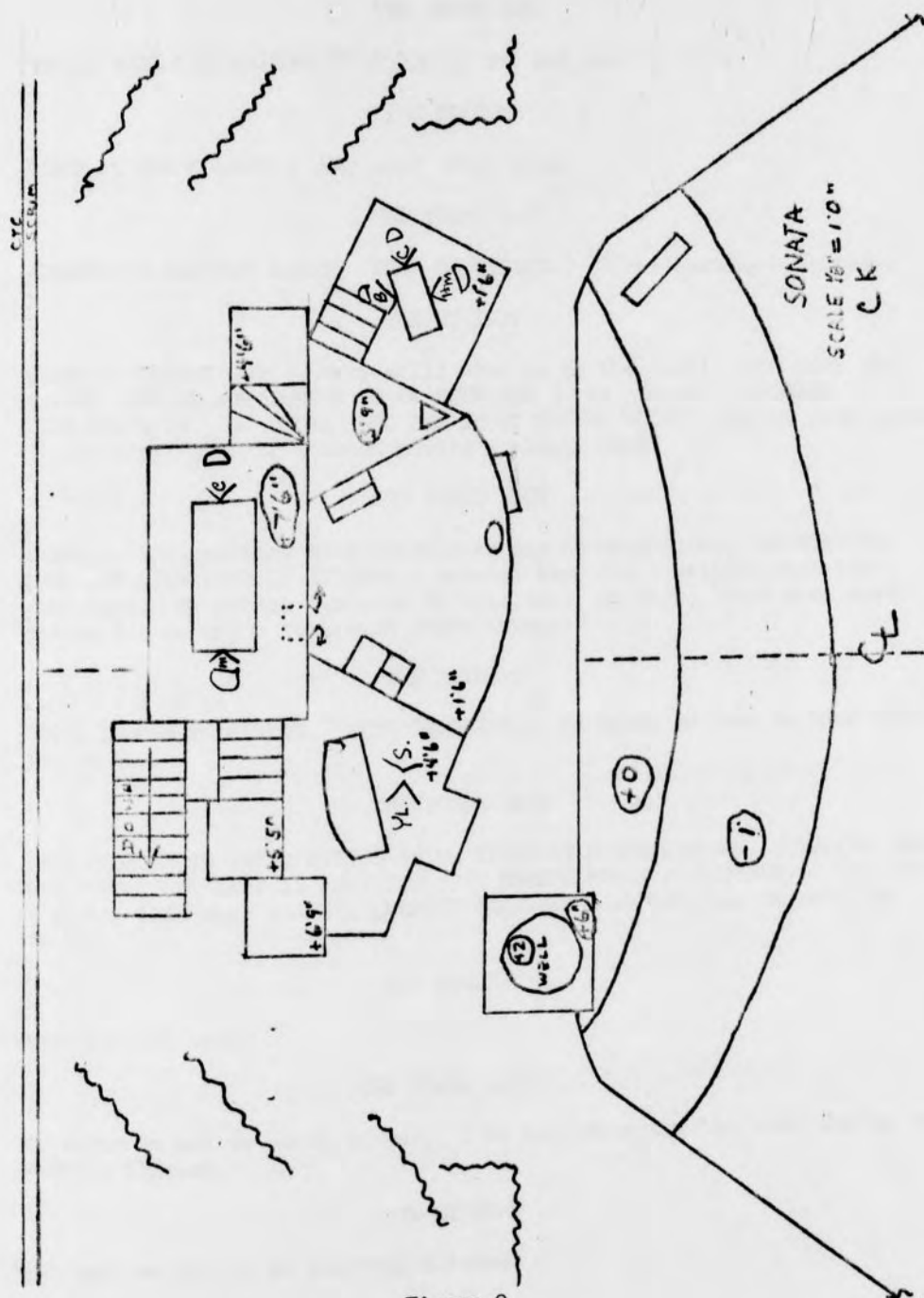


Figure 9

THE YOUNG LADY

(BREAKS AWAY AND CROSSES TO COUCH.) No, not yet. . . .

THE STUDENT

(TURNS TO YOUNG LADY.) Why not? What else?

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES TO BALCONY RIGHT. VERY CONTAINED.) Time--testing--patience.

THE STUDENT

(EAGER TO PLEASE HER.) Very well! Put me to the test! (SHE DOES NOT RESPOND BECAUSE SHE THINKS IT IS HOPELESS.) So silent? (CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS. HE LOOKS INTO THE GHOST SUPPER ROOM.) Why do your parents sit in there, silent, without saying a single word?

THE YOUNG LADY

(SADLY.) Because they have nothing to say to each other, (CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS LEFT OF STUDENT.) because they don't believe what the other says. My father explains it this way! He says, "What good does talking do, we can't fool each other anyway."

THE STUDENT

(LOOKS ACROSS TO STATUE. WITH CONTEMPT.) It makes me sick to hear things like that. . . .

THE YOUNG LADY

(COOK CROSSES TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM, PICKS UP MIMED DISHES. NOTICING THE COOK, THE YOUNG LADY IS AFRAID OF THE COOK'S POWER TO DESTROY.) The cook is coming this way. . . . (DISGUSTED.) Look at her, how big and fat she is. . . .

THE STUDENT

What does she want?

THE YOUNG LADY

She wants to ask me about dinner. I've been managing the house during my mother's illness.

THE STUDENT

What have we got to do with the kitchen?

THE YOUNG LADY

We have to eat, don't we? . . . Look at her, look at her. I can't bear to . . .

THE STUDENT

(RISES, CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT.) Who is that bloated monster?

THE YOUNG LADY

She belongs to the Hummel family of vampires. She's eating us up. . . .

THE STUDENT

Why don't you fire her?

THE YOUNG LADY

(HER FEAR BUILDING.) She won't leave! We can't control her. We got her because of our sins. . . . Don't you see that we're wasting away, withering? (COOK CROSSES TO KITCHEN. YOUNG LADY CROSSES RIGHT AS IF HYPNOTIZED BY THE COOK.)

THE STUDENT

Don't you get enough food to eat?

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES RIGHT BEHIND COUCH. COOK, HOUSEMAID AND BENGTTSSON MIME EATING THE LEFTOVERS GROSSLY.) We get course after course, but all the strength is gone from the food. She boils the beef until there's nothing left of it and serves us the sinews swimming in water while she herself drinks the stock. And when we have a roast, she cooks all the juice out of it and drinks it and eats the gravy. Everything she touches loses its flavor. It's as if she sucked it up with her very eyes. We get the grounds when she has finished her coffee. She drinks the wine and fills up the bottles with water.

THE STUDENT

(ANGRY, UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE TOLERATE SUCH A MONSTER.) Get rid of her!

THE YOUNG LADY

We can't!

THE STUDENT

Why not?

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES RIGHT OF COUCH. AGITATED.) We don't know! She won't leave!
(COOK CROSSES DOWN STEPS LEFT TO CENTER OF ROUND ROOM AND STARES AT
YOUNG LADY AND STUDENT.) No one can control her. . . . She has taken
all our strength from us.

THE STUDENT

Let me get rid of her for you.

THE YOUNG LADY

Oh, no! I guess this is how it's supposed to be. . . . Here she is!
She'll ask me what we're having for dinner--I'll tell her this and that--
she'll make objections--and finally we'll have what she says.

THE STUDENT

Then let her decide in the first place!

THE YOUNG LADY

She won't do that.

THE STUDENT

What a strange house! It's haunted, isn't it?

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES TO TOP OF STEPS LEFT.) Yes. (COOK TURNS LEFT AS IF RETURNING
TO THE KITCHEN. RELIEVED.) --She's turning back now. She saw you!

THE COOK

(TURNS RIGHT TO THEM.) Hah, that ain't why! (GRINNING SO THAT ALL HER
UGLY BLACK TEETH SHOW.)

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO STAIRS RIGHT. YELLING.) Get out!

THE COOK

When I feel like it I will! (SHE CONTINUES TO STARE. THE STUDENT AND
YOUNG LADY SHUDDER. PAUSE.) Now I feel like it! (CROSSES TO STATUE,
TURNS BACK TO HYACINTH ROOM TO LOOK AGAIN, CROSSES TO KITCHEN.)

THE YOUNG LADY

(STUDENT STARTS TO RUN AFTER COOK, YOUNG LADY STOPS HIM.) Don't lose your temper. (LEADS HIM BACK TO COUCH.) Learn to be patient. She's part of the trials and tribulations we have to go through in this home. And we've got a housemaid, too! Whom we have to clean up after!

THE STUDENT

(DEPRESSED THAT HE CANNOT REMEDY THE SITUATION.) I can feel myself sinking into the earth! (HE WANTS TO GET BACK TO THE INNOCENT LOVE THAT HE FIRST FELT FOR THE YOUNG LADY. HE THINKS THE MUSIC CAN REGAIN THE CALM.) Gor in aethere! --Let's have music!

THE YOUNG LADY

Wait!

THE STUDENT

(REACHES FOR IMAGINARY DULCIMER ON CUSHION.) No! Music now!

THE YOUNG LADY

(STOPS HIM.) Patience! --This room is called the testing room. It's beautiful to look at, but it's full of imperfections.

THE STUDENT

I don't believe it. (RISES AND CROSSES AROUND BEHIND COUCH TO MIMED FIREPLACE AT FAR RIGHT.) But if it's true we'll just have to ignore them. It's beautiful, but a little cold. Why don't you start the fire?

THE YOUNG LADY

Because it smokes up the room.

THE STUDENT

(LOOKS UP CHIMNEY.) Can't you have the chimney cleaned?

THE YOUNG LADY

It doesn't help! . . . Do you see that writing table? (INDICATING TABLE RIGHT OF COUCH.)

THE STUDENT

(RISES AND CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) What an extraordinarily handsome piece!

THE YOUNG LADY

But it wobbles. (HOUSEMAID CROSSES TO GHOST SUPPER ROOM TO WATCH, PRE-TENDS TO CLEAN ROOM.) Every day I lay a piece of cork under that foot, but the housemaid takes it away when she sweeps, and I have to cut a new piece. The penholder is covered with ink every morning, and so is the inkstand, and I have to clean them up after her, as regularly as the sun goes up. (PAUSE, TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO SHOW HIM HOW TERRIBLE HER LIFE IS.) What do you hate most to do?

THE STUDENT

To sort the week's wash! (GRIMACES IN DISGUST.)

THE YOUNG LADY

That's what I have to do! (GRIMACING IN DISGUST.)

THE STUDENT

What else?

THE YOUNG LADY

To be awakened in the middle of the night to have to get up and close the banging window--which the housemaid forgot to close. (HOUSEMAID LAUGHS CYNICALLY.)

THE STUDENT

Go on.

THE YOUNG LADY

To climb up a ladder and fix the damper on the stovepipe after the maid broke off the cord. (HOUSEMAID LAUGHS.)

THE STUDENT

Go on.

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES DOWN TO BALCONY. SHE BEGINS TO COLLAPSE FROM THE PRESSURE OF THE SITUATION AND LACK OF NOURISHMENT UNTIL SHE LEANS AGAINST BALCONY. HOUSEMAID MIMES PICKING UP DISHES AND CROSSES INTO KITCHEN.) To sweep up after her, to dust after her and to start the fire in the stove after her--all she does is throw on some wood! To adjust the damper, to dry the glasses, to set the table over and over again, to pull the corks out of the bottles, to open the windows and air the rooms, to make and remake my bed, to rinse the water bottle when it's green with sediment, to buy

matches and soap, which we're always out of, to wipe the chimneys and trim the wicks to keep the lamps from smoking--and to keep the lamps from going out I have to fill them myself when we have company. . . .

THE STUDENT

(PICKS UP INSTRUMENT.) Let's have music!

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT, TAKING INSTRUMENTS, PUTS ON CUSHION.) You have to wait! (STILL TRYING TO EXPLAIN HER SITUATION, HOPING HE WILL UNDERSTAND AND TAKE HER FROM THIS PRISON.) First comes the drudgery--the drudgery of keeping oneself above the dirt of life.

THE STUDENT

But you're well off. You've got two servants.

THE YOUNG LADY

Doesn't make any difference! Even if we had three! Living is such a nuisance, and I get so tired at times. . . . Imagine, if on top of it all one had a nursery and a baby crib.

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES TO YOUNG LADY, PUTS HANDS ON HER SHOULDERS. HAPPILY.) The dearest of joys!

THE YOUNG LADY

The dearest in more ways than one. . . . (PLEADING FOR A REASON TO LIVE.) Is life really worth so much trouble?

THE STUDENT

I suppose that depends on the reward you expect for all your troubles. . . . There's nothing I wouldn't do to win your hand.

THE YOUNG LADY

(PULLS AWAY.) Don't say that! You can never have me! (BECAUSE SHE IS FROM A FAMILY OF VAMPIRES.)

THE STUDENT

Why not?

THE YOUNG LADY

You mustn't ask. (PAUSE.)

THE STUDENT

(TRYING TO REMEMBER THE BEAUTY OF THEIR LOVE.) You dropped your bracelet out of the window. . . . (COOK CROSSES TO ROUND ROOM WITH MIMED BOTTLE IN HER RIGHT HAND.)

THE YOUNG LADY

Because my hand has grown so thin. (NOTICING THE COOK.) She's the one who's eating me--and all the rest of us.

THE STUDENT

What is she holding in her hand?

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES TO RIGHT OF COUCH. COOK CROSSES RIGHT TOWARD THE HYACINTH ROOM.) It's a bottle of coloring matter. It's got letters on it that look like scorpions. It's filled with soya sauce--which takes the place of gravy, which is transformed into soup, which serves as stock for cooking cabbage in, which is used to make mock turtle soup. . . .

THE STUDENT

Get out!

THE COOK

(LETTING THE YOUNG LADY KNOW THAT SHE CANNOT ESCAPE HER CLASS OF VAMPIRES SO SHE SHOULD LEAVE THE STUDENT ALONE.) You suck the sap from us, and we from you. We take the blood and give you back water--with coloring added. (COOK PUTS BOTTLE ON TABLE.) This is the coloring! (TO STUDENT. PAUSE. COOK CROSSES TO STEPS, TURNS TO YOUNG LADY AS IF TO WARN HER NOT TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE STUDENT. THEN CROSSES TO KITCHEN.) --I'm leaving now, but that doesn't mean I haven't stayed as long as I wanted to.

THE STUDENT

(AFTER COOK IS IN KITCHEN, YOUNG LADY SITS ON COUCH EXHAUSTED.) Why was Bengtsson given a medal? (TRYING TO FIGURE OUT ALL THE PIECES OF THIS PUZZLING HOUSE.)

THE YOUNG LADY

Because of his great merits.

THE STUDENT

Has he no faults?

THE YOUNG LADY

Yes, many great ones. But you don't get medals for them.

THE STUDENT

You have a great many secrets in this house.

THE YOUNG LADY

As in all houses. (RISES, CROSSES RIGHT. VERY STRONGLY, NOT WANTING TO EXPOSE ANY MORE BECAUSE SHE REALIZES HE CANNOT HELP HER.) Permit us to keep ours. (PAUSE.)

THE STUDENT

(WANTING TO HAVE AN OPEN, HONEST RELATIONSHIP WITH THE YOUNG LADY.) Do you admire frankness?

THE YOUNG LADY

Yes, within moderation.

THE STUDENT

Sometimes there comes over me a crazy desire to say everything I'm thinking. But I know the world would collapse completely if one were completely honest. (PAUSE, DECIDING TO TELL HIS STORY.) I went to a funeral the other day. . . . In church. . . . Very solemn, very beautiful.

THE YOUNG LADY

Mr. Hummel's funeral?

THE STUDENT

Yes, my false benefactor's. (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.) At the head of the coffin stood an old friend of the deceased. He carried the mace. The priest impressed me especially, his dignified manner and his moving words. I cried. We all cried. And afterwards we went to a restaurant. . . . (TURNS AWAY FROM THE YOUNG LADY.) And there I learned that the macebearer had been the lover of the dead man's son. (HE IS ASHAMED THAT HIS INNOCENT BELIEF HAD BEEN TURNED TO BITTERNESS JUST AS HIS INNOCENT LOVE FOR THE YOUNG LADY IS TURNING SOUR. THE YOUNG LADY STARES AT HIM, TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HIM.) And that the dead man had borrowed money from his son's admirer. . . . (PAUSE.) The day after that, they arrested the priest for embezzling church funds! (HE LOOKS AT THE

YOUNG LADY. BITTERLY.) It's a pretty story, isn't it? (THE YOUNG LADY TURNS HER HEAD AWAY IN DISGUST. PAUSE. TELLING HER THAT SHE IS DIS-ILLUSIONING HIM IN THE SAME WAY.) Do you know what I think of you now?

THE YOUNG LADY

(CROSSES TO BALCONY.) You must not tell me or I'll die!

THE STUDENT

(CROSSES BEHIND YOUNG LADY.) But I must or I'll die!

THE YOUNG LADY

In an asylum they say whatever they feel like.

THE STUDENT

Exactly right! That's where my father ended up--in a madhouse.

THE YOUNG LADY

Was he ill?

THE STUDENT

(TURNS YOUNG LADY TO HIM. HE MUST NOW TELL HER HIS STORY--EVEN THOUGH IT MAY KILL HER TO HEAR HOW HIS FATHER WAS DESTROYED ALMOST IDENTICALLY AS HER FATHER, HUMMEL, WAS DESTROYED.) No, he was quite healthy. But he was crazy! It just came over him. Let me tell you how it happened. . . . Like all of us, he had his circle of acquaintances, whom for convenience sake he called his friends. Of course they were a pretty sorry bunch of good-for-nothings--like most people. But he had to have some acquaintances, he couldn't just sit alone. Now one doesn't tell a person what one really thinks of him, not in ordinary conversation anyway--and my father didn't either. He knew how false they were. He saw through their deceitfulness right to the bottom of their souls. But he was an intelligent man, brought up to behave properly, and so he was always polite. But one day he held a big party. It was in the evening, he was tired after a day's work, and under the strain of forcing himself to hold his tongue half the time and of talking nonsense with his guests the other half. . . . (THE YOUNG LADY SHUDDERS IN FEAR OF WHAT MIGHT COME.) Well, whatever the reason, at the dinner table he rapped for silence, raised his glass, and began to make a speech. . . . Then something loosed the trigger, and in a long oration he stripped naked every single person there, one after another. Told them of all their deceits. And at the end, exhausted, he sat right down in the middle of the table and told them all to go to hell! (THE YOUNG LADY MOANS, SHE CANNOT TAKE THE TRUTH; SHE BECOMES WEAKER AND WEAKER THROUGH THIS SPEECH. SHE IS DYING OF WEAKNESS.) I was there and heard it all, and I shall never forget what happened afterwards. . . . Father and Mother began to fight,

the guests rushed for the door--and my father was taken off to the madhouse where he died! (PAUSE. YOUNG LADY CROSSES TO COUCH, COLLAPSES. STUDENT BEGINS TO MOVE AROUND THE ROOM, RELATING TO OBJECTS IN THE ROOM. CROSSES BACK OF COUCH AND AROUND YOUNG LADY.) If you keep silent too long, stagnant water begins to accumulate and things begin to rot. That's what's happening in this house. Something's rotting here. And I thought it was paradise when I saw you come in here for the first time. . . . It was a Sunday morning, and I stood looking into these rooms. I saw a colonel who wasn't a colonel. I had a magnanimous benefactor who turned out to be a bandit and had to hang himself. I saw a mummy who wasn't one, and a maiden who--(SPEAKING OF HIS OWN LOST INNOCENCE.) speaking of which, where can one find virginity? Where is beauty to be found? In nature, and my mind when it's all dressed up in its Sunday clothes. Where do honor and faith exist? In fairy tales and children's games! Where can you find anything that fulfills its promise? Only in one's imagination! . . . (CROSSES TO BALCONY.) Now your flowers have poisoned me, and I have passed the poison back. I begged you to become my wife in my home. We played and we sang. We created poetry together. And then came the cook. . . . Sursum Corda! (LOOKS AT YOUNG LADY, CROSSES TO DULCIMER.) Try just once again to pluck fire and brightness from the golden harp! Please try! I beg you, I implore you on my knees! . . . (SHE DOES NOT RESPOND.) Very well. Then I shall do it myself. (HE TAKES THE DULCIMER BUT NO SOUND COMES FROM THE STRINGS. HE MIMES PUTTING IT ON THE BALCONY.) It is silent and deaf. Tell me, why are beautiful flowers so poisonous, and the most beautiful the most deadly? Why? The whole of creation, all of life, is cursed and damned. . . . Why would you not become my bride? Because you are sick, infected at the very core of life. . . . (STANDS LEFT LOOKING AT KITCHEN.) Now I can feel that vampire in the kitchen beginning to suck the blood from me. She must be one of those lamias that suck the blood of suckling babes. It's always in the kitchen that the children are nipped in the bud. And if not there, then in the bedroom. . . . (HE IS THE KIND OF PERSON THAT MUST SEE AND ACCEPT THE TRUTH, EVEN IF IT IS PAIN-FILLED.) There are poisons that seal the eyes and poisons that open them. I must have been born with the latter kind in my veins, because I cannot see what is ugly as beautiful and I cannot call what is evil good. I cannot. They say that Christ harrowed hell. What they really meant was that he descended to earth, to this penal colony, to this madhouse and morgue of a world. (HE FEELS AS IF HE IS CHRIST AND IS BEING KILLED IN THIS HOUSE BECAUSE HE WANTS TO SAVE THE YOUNG LADY.) And the inmates crucified Him when He tried to free them. But the robber they let free. Robbers always win sympathy. . . . (CALLING ON CHRIST BECAUSE HE DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO SAVE THE YOUNG LADY.) Woe! Woe to all of us! Savior of the World, save us! We are perishing! (THE YOUNG LADY HAS COLLAPSED MORE AND MORE. SHE IS OBVIOUSLY DYING. SHE RINGS THE IMAGINARY BELL ON TABLE RIGHT. BENGTSSON ENTERS FROM KITCHEN, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT INTO FRONT ROOM.

THE YOUNG LADY

Bring the screen. Quickly! I'm dying. (BENGTSSON CROSSES TO SCREEN

IN ROUND ROOM. DEATH SCREEN MUSIC BEGINS. BENGTTSSON RETURNS WITH THE SCREEN, OPENS IT, AND PLACES IT IN FRONT OF THE YOUNG LADY. STUDENT CROSSES TO BACK OF COUCH. BENGTTSSON EXITS TO KITCHEN.)

THE STUDENT

(DEATH IS THE ONLY ANSWER FOR THE YOUNG LADY.) Your liberator is coming! Welcome, pale and gentle one. . . . (STUDENT KNEELS LEFT OF COUCH. AS IF PRAYING.) And you, you beautiful, innocent, lost soul, who suffer for no fault of your own, sleep, sleep a dreamless sleep. And when you wake again . . . may you be greeted by a sun that doesn't scorch, in a home without dust, by friends without faults, and by a love without flaw. . . . (CROSSES LEFT TO BUDDHA.) Buddha, wise and gentle Buddha, sitting there waiting for a heaven to grow out of the earth, grant us the purity of will and the patience to endure our trials, that your hopes will not come to naught. (THE MUSIC IS THE SAME AS THE POEM MUSIC AT THE END OF SCENE II, BUT THE STUDENT DELIVERS THE POEM TO THE AUDIENCE WITH A NEW UNDERSTANDING. HE NOW SEES THAT TRUTH AND HONESTY ARE ABOVE ALL VIRTUES EVEN IF ONE MUST SUFFER TO ACHIEVE THEM. AS THE POEM PROGRESSES THE LIGHTS FADE UP FULL, FLOODING THE STAGE WITH LIGHT.

I saw the sun
And from its blaze
There burst on me
The deepest truth:

Man reaps as he sows;
Blessed is he
Who sows the good.

For deeds done in anger
Kindness alone
Can make amends.

Bring cheer to those
Whom you have hurt,
And kindness reaps
Its own rewards.

The pure in heart
Have none to fear
The harmless are happy.
The guileless are good.

(THE STUDENT STOPS AT THE BALCONY. HE IS COMING OUT OF HIS DREAM. HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE YOUNG LADY, BUT HE IS ALSO TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF, HIS OWN WORLD OF SUFFERING AND PAIN.) You poor little child! Child of this world of illusion and guilt and suffering and death--this world of eternal change and disappointment and never-ending pain! May the Lord of Heaven have mercy on you as you journey forth. (EXIT RIGHT. MUSIC ENDS. BLACK OUT.)

PART III

PART III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

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CRITICAL EVALUATION

The Ghost Sonata was presented on the main stage in the W. Raymond Taylor Drama and Speech Building on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro for four performances on the evenings of April 13, 14, and 15, and on the afternoon of April 16, 1972. This third and final part will be a critical evaluation of how well the director feels The Ghost Sonata succeeded in performance. The evaluation will be based on (a) the initial interpretation as compared with the final product, (b) the actor-director relationships during the rehearsals and performances, (c) the audience's reaction to the production, and (d) relevant personal observations of the director

Interpretation, Style, and Mood

The Ghost Sonata has no story line that carries the audience through the three scenes. The basic idea of the naive student becoming realistically aware of himself and the world around him is the only element that ties the play together. The director feels that this element was somewhat obscured in her production, because the dream quality was not clearly evident. The audience should be able to distinctly see that all that happens is in the mind of the dreamer. It is not reality; it is not a story; however, it is, like all dreams, abstracted and symbolic. There are a number of ways the director could have possibly clarified the dream motif. To have done so would have required

changes in the nature of the setting, the lighting, and the acting styles.

If the director could have changed the set to depict the dream motif more fully, she would have asked the designer for a more mobile set. At the beginning of the play, when the student first enters, the house could have been on wagons extremely upstage. As the house became prominent in the dream, as it became important to the student, it could have moved down stage. And as different areas of the house came into his imagination, they could have been moved in to him. This would have added a fluidity which would have seemed more dream-like to the audience. The lighting could enhance this by having more area lighting which would focus on the area to which the student was relating. The slides which were to be used to clarify some of the symbols and to give the idea of flashes of a fragmented dream were eliminated after the first performance because they did not enhance but confused the dream motif. The director feels that these slides could have been used to supplement the dream if the slides had been more ephemeral. If the slides had been developed with a soft edge and then been projected through gobos of various shapes and sizes onto screens that did not look like screens, the effect would possibly have been more non-realistic.

The acting style in this production was too realistic. The director feels that the student should have been realistic because he is the dreamer; the audience should identify with him as such. But the rest of the characters should have been more abstracted. For example, in the third scene, the young lady should have seemed more like a china doll. Her movement could have been fluid but contained; her voice could

have been melancholy like a gregorian chant; her emotional involvement could have been superficial and detached. She could have been a caricature of the beautiful but strong and cold woman that Strindberg feared so desperately. All of the other characters could have been more abstracted.

The director feels that she and the cast were working in the right direction toward symbolic dream qualities but did not go far enough. There was a problem that is often encountered in non-realistic acting. The young inexperienced actor feels that he may seem foolish or ridiculous if he acts non-realistically. The director tried to free the actors with exercises that would make them feel comfortable in trying new things with their characters, but she did not go far enough. One particular exercise that did help the cast enlarge their characters was the use of masks. For one entire rehearsal the cast had to wear masks. Since they could not depend on their facial expressions to carry their characters, they used larger movement and larger voices. After this exercise they took off their masks and went through the play again. The difference was phenomenal. Characters had a clearer, more precise form and a larger impact. Another attempt to overcome the realistic barrier was singing the script. However, this did not work because the cast was too self-conscious about their voices to use them positively.

The actors, except for the student, could have been more two-dimensional if they had worked from the start on using a movement and voice approach instead of a motivational one. The director did use movement and voice exercises but gave more emphasis to believability. The two characters who were most successful in achieving the dream

quality were the Milkmaid and the Dead Man. These two characters had no realistic base and no lines so their characters were able to develop purely from movement. The director feels she could have used some of the elements of these two characters to enhance the dreamlike qualities in the other characters. One element that might have been particularly effective is detachment. The Milkmaid and the Dead Man were totally in their own world. They did not interact with other characters. Other characters of the dream should have had that same detached quality. For example, the Mummy could have been more emotionless in her scene with Hummel. She could have given her lines as if she were a Mummy, a dead left-over of the aristocracy. All of the characters of the dream could have justifiably been more detached in order to separate them from the student.

One other point of interpretation might have made the production more meaningful to the audience. The director at one time considered taking the play out of the European aristocracy and placing it in the Southern aristocracy after the Civil War. The student would have been the son of a carpetbagger and the servants would have been black. The setting would have been a Southern plantation. Perhaps in this type of setting the relevance of the play would have been less obscure. The director decided against this plan, because the designer did not like it and there would have been a problem finding enough black actors. Also, at the time, the director did not think she could justify such a transposition.

Although the director can see that the style and mood of the production were not quite precise enough to carry the theme, she was

pleased with the level that was achieved. The production did have a consistent style that grew out of the rehearsals. All of the characters fitted into the production to make a whole unit. The precision of the actors in executing the emptiness and hollowness of their characters created a mood that was both beautiful and eerie. All that was really missing was a more solidified framework that would have clarified the theme.

The director's decision to have the actors mime all the props was a positive factor in developing an eerie and dreamlike style. The only prop that was real was the death screen. Since it was the most important symbol--the symbol of the death that pervaded the house--its importance was enhanced because it was the only real prop. The absence of the other props gave focus to the characters and gave the audience a clue that the situation was not reality. The characters, their physical being and what they say were the substance of the play. Miming the props gave the actors specific problems to work on which made them more conscious of their characters. They had to constantly think of how their particular character would execute an activity and execute it with enough precision for it to carry out to the audience.

The use of music to highlight certain segments of the play also drew the production out of the realistic vein. Since key parts of the play are done in silence, the music drew focus to these parts and gave them an eerie but beautiful quality. For example, the director and composer abstracted the Mummy into the musical idea of a fragile, old music-box that was running down. This music played at the first entrance of the Mummy out of the closet. It gave a softening effect to her

parrot-like movement. The audience could see both the pathos and grotesqueness of a woman chained within a dying society.

Because of the detailed work done on character, the pace of the production was often slow. It was difficult to pace the show according to builds in the script because there isn't a major climax. Perhaps the intensity of the production also cancelled out variety in pacing. The director feels the tempo could have picked up in the first and third scenes. In the first scene, if the focus had been more directed on the student and what was happening with him, there would have been more variety in the tempo. And again the same is true for the third scene. If less attention had been paid to the reality of the young lady, the student would have drawn more focus and the tempo of the scene would have been faster. Both of these scenes are full of exposition and philosophy which can slow down the tempo, but if this exposition and philosophy had focused on the Student within his dream, a more varied tempo would have grown out of the production.

Actor-Director Relationships

The most rewarding aspect of directing The Ghost Sonata was the close rapport that arose between the director and the cast. As stated in Part One, the director emphasized ensemble acting in order to create a consistent viable style and to project the idea of non-communication within the Student's dream. This feeling of an ensemble cast was achieved mainly during the rehearsal period. At the beginning of each rehearsal period, the cast did exercises. The director and the cast started calling the exercises "games" because they were stimulating and

fun. There were standard vocal and physical exercises done at each rehearsal and there were specific games that were only done once or twice with which the director would surprise the cast. These "surprise" games were to work on specific problems that the director saw or they were to bring the cast closer together through new awareness of themselves and each other.

Some of the exercises were simple, well-known vocal, physical, and sensitivity exercises. Most of the cast members were fairly inexperienced, younger than the roles they were playing, and strangers to each other. The vocal exercises were necessary because of the inexperienced voices and regional accents. Since all the props were mimed and many of the actors had to deal with characters older than themselves, physical exercises to create body-awareness were imperative. To help with the mime, real props were used for the first two weeks of rehearsal. Simultaneously during the exercise period, the actors had to create objects through mime. They also had to become their characters outside of the situations in the script. Characters who did not interact with each other in the script had to interact with each other in the situations outside the script. The actors decided what animals they thought their characters were like and interacted as the animals. This was particularly relevant and useful in freeing actors to act non-realistically. Since the Mummy had to be parrot-like, she felt free to try many bird-like qualities because the other actors were also pretending to be animals. Another exercise which the director calls "meetings" was used fairly consistently. The cast would divide into two equal lines facing each other. In character, one by one, each actor would go to the actor

across from him and execute a physical action that depicted his attitude toward the other character or make a sound that indicated his attitude. This exercise was effective in giving the actors freedom to use their imagination outside of the script. Since the characters of The Ghost Sonata are the clues to the play, it was necessary for each actor to create a full character that he was comfortable with.

The actress who was playing the Cook had at one time been very over-weight. She felt very self-conscious about playing such an enormous grotesque creature. To make the actress feel more comfortable, each of the servants, who were all grotesque in some way, analyzed their movement physically. Then they sat around the kitchen table and tried to see who could eat a mimed dinner the most disgustingly. After this improvisation, they all felt more comfortable about their characters. Since grossness was the goal, the actress playing the Cook felt she had something outside herself to work on and she had other actors working on the same problem. This use of improvisation outside the script aided the actors in feeling more comfortable with their strange roles.

An almost identical problem occurred with the actress playing the Fiancee. The actress was eighteen and beautiful, but had to play a senile old lady who never spoke. The actress did not like being an old lady and quickly became bored with her role. After much trial and error, the director told the actress to spend all of her time on stage recreating the beauty and elegance of the Fiancee as a young woman. The director gave the actress a very old lacy handkerchief with lovely dragon flies on it. This handkerchief represented the fragile beauty of the woman Hummel had destroyed. From that point on, the character of the

Fiancee came alive. She pretended to be seeing and hearing the glory of her past but kept the physical old age that she started with.

Another problem was encountered at the opposite end of the spectrum of acting techniques. The actor who was playing the student felt so close to the reality of his role that he was too self-conscious to be as realistic as he needed to be in order to be in contrast with the characters who were of his dream. The director was unaware of this problem at first and heightened the problem by drawing parallels between the actor and his character. Finally the actor, after much hostility, came to the director and said that he felt so close to the character that he could not play it with conviction. After this disclosure, the director began working on the physical aspects of the character with the actor. He was given very precise direction about his body and voice without relating intellectual motivation. For three or four rehearsals the director stood on stage with the actor and told him exactly what to do. She coaxed him line by line and movement by movement through all his scenes. The other actors could not hear what the director was saying but the encouragement that the actor was receiving brought his character so alive that the rest of the cast approved of the method and the actor gained enough confidence to work on his role freely.

The cast members were required to come to exercises only if they were in the scene to be rehearsed. However, most of them enjoyed the exercises or games so much that they would come every night. But there were two actors, playing Johansson and Bengtsson, who thought the exercises were silly and needless. They came to the exercises but would not actively participate. These two actors had a scene together and they

were having problems with it. Finally the problem built to the point where one actor walked out of a rehearsal. The director then asked both actors to talk to each other alone and after they did, they came to an understanding with each other that the rest of the cast had achieved in the exercises. From that point on the two actors had enough rapport to work on their scene with respect and tolerance for each other.

The director feels that there was one negative aspect of the ensemble approach. Because of the amount of time spent on making the actors feel comfortable, the acting style did not reach its final goal. A consistent style did emerge from the closeness of the group, but the intimacy in the cast may have prevented the actors from being larger than life. The actors were so intensely involved with their characters and the other actors that they forgot they had to be presentational enough to give the audience the unreal quality of a dream. The director feels that she should have emphasized the audience earlier in the rehearsal period so that the actors could have projected their characters a bit more during the performance. This could have been accomplished by giving the actors more dream-like activities such as unusual tonal patterns, more freeze-in-action exercises, and slow-motion activities. This, coupled with earlier audience-awareness, would have given the production a more precise totality.

Audience Reaction

During the performances of The Ghost Sonata, the director sat in the projection booth so that she could watch the performance and the audience. The audiences were made up of members of the community and

the university. The performances were well attended in spite of very hot weather and no air conditioning in the theatre.

The director observed that the audience was of two minds. Some of the audience seemed rapt and intrigued whereas other audience members seemed bored and confused. The titles of the two newspaper reviews also indicate this dichotomy--"'Sonata' Casts Eerie Shadow on Reality"¹ and "'Ghost Sonata' Nearly Plotless; Image Unclear."² Those members of the audience who were willing to accept a play without a plot seemed to enjoy the production. In his review for The Greensboro Record, Doug Waller said, "The UNC-G performance last night of the chamberplay was excellent. Strindberg's characters kept the play alive and the cast should be commended for the depth in their portrayals."³ These audience members seemed willing to accept the idea of a play that goes beyond the normal realistic genre of the theatre. The director feels that they were able to accept events on stage as they happened and hold the questions until after they had seen the total production. And there were those audience members who were affected by the play and pondered its meaning. One audience member, Richard Cumbie, a student at UNC-G, wrote a poem about the production and especially the Milkmaid's effect on him.

¹Doug Waller, "'Sonata' Casts Eerie Shadow on Reality," The Greensboro Record, Section A, (April 14, 1972), p. 18.

²Joe Knox, "'Ghost Sonata' Nearly Plotless; Image Unclear," Greensboro Daily News, Section A, (April 14, 1972), p. 15.

³Waller, "Eerie Shadow," Section A, p. 18.

The Apparition

She was asked to be an apparition
 And appeared on stage from nowhere--
 Opening the space invisible darkness
 Quick as dancing Shiva's soul
 Consumes oxygen in a dying miner's
 Collapsed shaft. Sacrificing to
 Graceful form, I am certain she is
 Darkness' soul and space is her
 Yielding body. But her apparition
 Dissolves suddenly, and I am left
 Wondering if she were. For days after
 The play, I saunter the streets like a
 Familiar pedestrian who searches for what
 He passed years: seeking only her apparition.⁴

After the production, the director and members of the cast discussed the production with several freshman English classes at UNC-G who had seen the performance. They had read the play prior to seeing the production. For the most part, these students were mystified that the play could take such a beautiful form. They had not understood the play until they saw the production. However, they did feel that some of the symbolism was vague. As stated earlier in this part, the director feels that the production would have been more meaningful to the audience if the dream had been more clearly delineated.

The director feels that non-realistic plays, except musicals, are difficult for today's audience to accept because they have not been exposed to them. Perhaps with time and more theatrical productions, audiences will accept the stage as a place where anything and everything can happen.

⁴Richard Cumbie, "The Apparition," unpublished poem written to the actress Sybil Rosen, May 1972.

Personal Observations of the Director

The director feels that directing The Ghost Sonata was an enormous learning experience for her and the cast. Being a director means being what each individual member of the cast and crew needs and still maintaining enough distance to see the production as an audience member. Each actor, especially those who have not had a great deal of experience, must be made to feel secure enough to create a role from the sketches of character that the director gives him. In order to give the actor this security, the director must deeply believe in what he or she is doing. The Ghost Sonata had and still has immense social and philosophical meaning to this director. Only because the meaning within the script became a concept in the director's mind which she could communicate to the cast did The Ghost Sonata take form on stage.

The director must be able to assume almost any role on cue in order to communicate to the actor. Each actor works differently and the director must respond to the needs of these actors individually. The concept of the production as a totality can be expressed intellectually to the entire cast, but each integral part must be communicated personally to each actor.

Patience was the tool that this director found most effective. Because the director was dealing with human beings, she had to allow for many breakdowns in communication. If something did not work, she had to go back and try again and again. And waiting for something to work was often annoying. But waiting and coaxing and being open for new ideas was the only way this production of The Ghost Sonata took place. It was a challenging and rewarding experience.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER FROM THE TRANSLATOR

VASSAR COLLEGE

POUGHKEEPSIE · NEW YORK 12601

Department of Drama

November 17, 1971

Miss Roberta Penn Linder
The University of North Carolina
Greensboro, N.C.

Dear Miss Linder:

The performance rights to my translation of The Ghost Sonata are handled by Toby Cole, 234 West 44th Street, Suite 402, Sardi Building, New York, N.Y., 10036. I am forwarding your letter to her, and she should be getting in touch with you.

Although I have had my say about the play in my introduction, I would be happy to try to answer any specific questions you might have. In the productions I have seen the director emphasized the bizarreness and alienated the audience. I should strive for lightness, for humor whenever possible, for naturalness even when it seems impossible. Then the bizarre moments by contrast become more dramatic and compelling. Ingmar Bergman in his staging of it gave the part of Hummel to a enormously rotund actor associated with the lighter repertory -- a Burl Ives type. -- Whatever you try, you are likely to lose your audience during the last scene. It's an enormous challenge, and all I can suggest is that you make it as beautiful as possible, beautiful to look at, beautiful to hear, as eerily beautiful as one of the last Beethoven sonatas. And use every stratagem you can think of to rid the

APPENDIX B

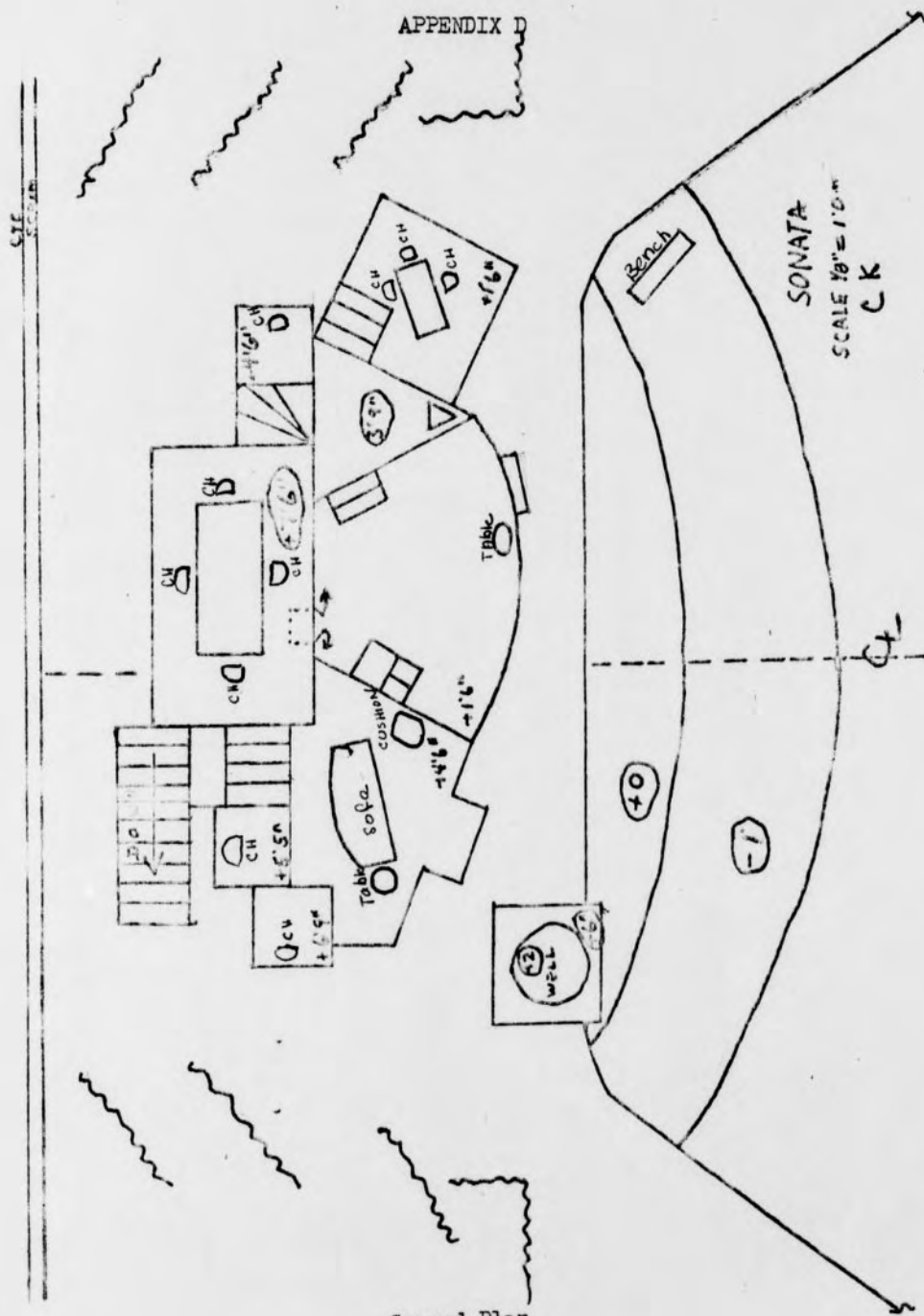
THE CAST

The Old Man, Mr. Hummel	Tom Kenyon
The Statue	Ruth D. Campbell
The Dead Man, formerly a Consul	Charles Correll
The Colonel	Ronald L. Sydow
The Fiancee	Lelia Pendleton
The Superintendent's Wife	Nancy Johnston
The Superintendent	Steve Settle
The Housemaid	Mara Sage
The Lady in Black	Jo Giraudo
The Milkmaid, an Apparition	Sybil Rosen
The Student, Arkenholz	John Fahnestock
The Young Lady	Ann Lyon
Johansson	D. Dawson
Baron Skanskorg	Skip Lawing
The Beggars	Charles Correll
	Susan Dillard
	Nancy Johnston
	Steve Settle
	Joanna Smith
Bengtsson	Michael Lilly
The Mummy	Kathleen Larkin
The Cook	Betsy Silverman

APPENDIX C
REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

<u>NO.</u>	<u>DAY.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
1	Sun.	Feb. 13	Read and discuss	2:00 pm
2	Wed.	Feb. 23	Production meeting	7:00 pm
3	Thurs.	Feb. 24	Character discussion	7:00 pm
4	Mon.	Feb. 28	Block scene i	7:00 pm
5	Tues.	Feb. 29	Run through scene i	7:00 pm
			Block scene ii	8:30 pm
6	Thurs.	Mar. 2	Block scene iii	7:00 pm
7	Sun.	Mar. 5	Run through scene iii	7:00 pm
			Character interpretation scene i	8:30 pm
8	Mon.	Mar. 6	Character interpretation scene ii	7:00 pm
9	Tues.	Mar. 7	Character interpretation scene iii	7:00 pm
10	Wed.	Mar. 8	Full run through	7:00 pm
11	Thurs.	Mar. 9	Scene iii, detail	7:00 pm
12	Fri.	Mar. 10	Scene ii, detail	7:00 pm
13	Sun.	Mar. 12	Scene i, detail	7:00 pm
14	Mon.	Mar. 13	Full run through	7:00 pm
15	Tues.	Mar. 14	Scene ii problems	7:00 pm
16	Wed.	Mar. 15	Scene i problems	7:00 pm
17	Thurs.	Mar. 16	Scene iii problems	7:00 pm
18	Fri.	Mar. 17	Special character work	7:00 pm
19	Sun.	Mar. 19	Full run through	7:00 pm
20	Mon.	Mar. 20	Run through, i and ii	7:00 pm
21	Tues.	Mar. 21	Run through on set	7:00 pm
22	Wed.	Mar. 22	Run through on set	8:30 pm
23	Thurs.	Mar. 23	Run through on set	9:00 pm
24	Tues.	Apr. 4	Readjust after vacation	7:00 pm
			Full run through	8:30 pm
25	Wed.	Apr. 5	Run through	7:00 pm
26	Thurs.	Apr. 6	Run through	7:00 pm
27	Fri.	Apr. 7	Run through	7:00 pm
28	Sun.	Apr. 9	Technical rehearsal	9:30 am
29	Mon.	Apr. 10	Technical and dress rehearsal	7:00 pm
30	Tues.	Apr. 11	Dress rehearsal	7:00 pm
31	Wed.	Apr. 12	Dress rehearsal	7:00 pm
32	Thurs.	Apr. 13	Performance	8:30 pm
33	Fri.	Apr. 14	Performance	8:30 pm
34	Sat.	Apr. 15	Performance	8:30 pm
35	Sun.	Apr. 16	Performance	2:30 pm

APPENDIX D



SONATA

W.O.1 = „Eti Eti“

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